RASPUTIN AND THE JEWS

A Reversal of History

DELIN COLÓN

Dedication

This book is dedicated to
the memory of my father,
Alex Linowitz,
To my late son, Willy Graves,
and to my loving husband, David,
who encouraged me to write it.

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By Delin Colón

An account of Rasputin as a healer, humanitarian, equal rights activist and man of God, and why he was so vilified by the aristocracy that their libelous and slanderous rumors became accepted as history.

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Introduction

This small tome is intended to vindicate Grigory Efimovitch Rasputin (born approximately 1870; died 1916), spiritual advisor to the last Tsar and Tsarina of Russia. It means to debunk all of the outrageous rumors perpetrated by a bigoted, small-minded, self-absorbed society. If you are looking for a list his debauchery, sins, or crimes, you won't find them here, for there exists no evidence of those, other than rumors. If you're seeking the gory description of his brutal murder, you won't find it here. And if you want to establish a link between Rasputin and the fall of the Romanov Empire, you won't find any, because there is none.

What you *will* find is testimony from many who knew him, including his enemies, regarding his humanitarian activities. You will find accounts of his aid to the poor and the ill and his endless efforts to avoid war and its needless cost of lives. You will find substantial evidence of his aid to Russian Jewry and his attempts to obtain equal rights for this group, which was Russia's most severely oppressed and restricted population.

But, most of all, you will find that what has passed as history, for a century, was not the truth, which exemplifies how history is written by the powerful not by the oppressed.

Important Persons

Beilis, Mendel – Jewish guard of a brickyard, falsely accused of "ritual murder"

Bonch-Bruevich, Vladimir – expert on Russian sectarianism

Gapon, Father George – Priest who led workers presenting a petition for better conditions and pay

Gilliard, Pierre – Tutor to the royal children

Gruzenberg, Oskar O. – Jewish defense lawyer, served as counsel for Mendel Beilis (also Grusenberg)

Guseva, Chionya – religious fanatic who tried to assassinate Rasputin

Khvostov, Alexei – anti-Semitic Minister of Internal Affairs from 1915-1916

Kokovtsev – Minister of Finance, then Prime Minister from 1911-1914

Rasputin, Dmitri (Mitya) – Grigory's son

Rasputin, Grigory Efimovitch – wandering spiritual pilgrim who served as spiritual advisor to the Tsar

Rasputin, Matryona (Marya) – Grigory's elder daughter

Rasputin, Proskovia – Grigory's wife

Rasputin, Varvara (Varya) – Grigory's younger daughter

Romanov, Tsar Nicholas II – son of Tsar Alexander III

Romanov, Tsarina Alexandra – wife of Tsar Nicholas II

Romanov, Tsarevitch Alexei – son of Tsar Nicholas II, heir to the throne

Romanov, Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolayevitch – uncle to Nicholas II, Commander-in-Chief of Russian Armies

Ruzsky, Nikolai – General of the Third Army, Commander-in-Chief of the Northern Front

Sazanov, Sergei – Minister of Foreign Affairs

Schlegovitov – Chairman of the Council of State

Simanovitch, Aron – Jewish secretary to Rasputin, jeweler by trade

Sliosberg, Genrikh (also Henry Sliozberg) – Jewish attorney, administrative law advisor to Minister of the Interior

Spiridovitch, General Alexandre – Chief of the Tsar's Secret Police

Stolypin – Prime Minister 1906-1911

Sturmer – Prime Minister, Minister of the Interior and Foreign Affairs

Vyrubova, Anna – lady-in-waiting, confidante and best friend of Tsarina Alexandra

Witte, Count Sergei – Prime Minister from 1905-1906, also Finance Minister and served under Tsar Alexander III

Yanushkevitch – General and Military Chief of Staff

Chapter 1 – Purpose

Grigory Efimovich Rasputin-Novy has been unfairly maligned for nearly a century, and all because history is written by the politically powerful to whom it was beneficial to record the rumors, myths and exaggerations surrounding this controversial figure. The people Rasputin helped – the underdogs of society, the Jews, peasants, and poverty-stricken – were not in a position to speak up or even to be believed. Just as Russia wanted to blame the Jews for its ills and lost battles, so did they want to blame Rasputin, rather than the weak-willed Tsar Nicholas II, for the downfall of the Romanov Empire. The long perpetuated image of Rasputin is of a man who committed evil for the sake of evil alone. Naturally, the largely anti-Semitic aristocracy would think it evil to champion the cause of the oppressed Russian peasants and especially the Jews.

Although most records of his good works and petitions were destroyed by his allies to avoid persecution by the tsarist government or the Provisional Government that followed it, some accounts of his efforts can be found in the memoirs of his Jewish secretary, Aron Simanovitch, in the biographies of her father by Marya Rasputin, in the memoirs of Mme Vyrubova (the Tsarina's lady-in-waiting) and General Spiridovitch (Chief of the Tsar's secret police), and in Edvard Radzinsky's "The Rasputin File", among many others.

Both Rasputin's daughter and secretary, in addition to numerous others, describe him as a man of God, as an empathic and herbal healer, as a man of peace wishing to avoid war at all costs, and as a champion of equal rights for all Russian citizens, regardless of their faith or background.

Simanovitch's account is often discredited due to the inclusion in his memoirs of bizarre court gossip and exaggeration of his own importance in the court, although the cases of Rasputin aiding Jews are substantiated by many reliable sources and are indisputable. Simanovitch has also been dismissed because, although he was a jeweler, he also ran

gambling parlors. And he has been disregarded because he was a Jew who, through his ten year association with Rasputin, had to resort to bribing officials to save the careers, families, homes, educations, and lives of countless Russian Jews who, at that time (and for centuries before) were denied basic human rights.

Before moving to Saint Petersburg, Simanovitch and his family lived in Kiev where he owned a jewelry store. In 1905, as in many other times and places, the military conducted a pogrom (an organized massacre of Jews and destruction of their homes and property) in Kiev. Simanovitch had been in St. Petersburg at the time, but rushed back to Kiev. His shop was ransacked, but his immediate family was spared, owing to the fact that he paid the chief of police for protection. As he and his family were given safe conduct out of Kiev, he was shaken by the sight of his dead friends and neighbors who'd been slaughtered outside the synagogue after a holy service. He saw corpses, burnt houses and broken windows. At that moment, he vowed to do what he could to acquire equal rights for Jews and abolish this terror. He saw his association with Rasputin as a means to this end.

In order to understand who the truly evil ones are, and the underlying causes of Rasputin's benevolence to Russian Jews, we need to take a brief look at how tsarist Russia treated its Jewish population.

Chapter II – Anti-Semitism in Tsarist Russia

The oppression of Jews is well documented from the beginning of Judaism itself and certainly throughout Russian, as well as European history. But, for our purposes, we'll begin with Peter the Great who ruled from 1696 to 1725.

Peter the Great's attitude can be summed up by his response, in 1698, to the Jews of Amsterdam who requested admission to Russia. He reportedly stated, "The time has not yet come for a union of the Jews and Russia." He's said to have added that he would rather have Mohammedans or heathens in Russia, than Jews who were "tricksters and cheats." With regard to a request from the Jewish delegation to have the right to trade in Russia, he's said to state, "You imagine that the Jews are so shrewd as to be able to gain advantage over the Christian merchants; but I assure you that my people are more cunning even than the Jews, and will not permit themselves to be deceived."[1] Unquestionably, a leader demonstrating such paranoia and fear will spread this sentiment amongst his people.

Catherine I (ruled from 1725 to 1727) issued an edict ordering the expulsion of Jews from Russia. The decree stated, "The Jews, both male and female, who are living in Ukraine and other Russian towns are to be immediately deported beyond the border, and must not henceforth be allowed to enter Russia under any circumstances. The requisite measures to prevent this must be taken in all places. In removing the said Jews, care should be taken to prevent their carrying out of Russia gold ducats or any similar Russian coins. If such should be found in their possession, they should be exchanged for copper." However, the Ukrainians found themselves in dire economic straits without the Jewish merchants and artisans, and petitioned the Senate, in 1728, to revoke this law.[2]

Under Peter II (ruled from 1727 to 1730), restrictions were somewhat relaxed, but toward the end of Anna Ivanovna's rule (1730 to

1740), the latter ordered the expulsion of Jews from Little Russia (Ukraine) and forbade them to own or lease inns or other property. Elizabeth (ruling from 1741 to 1762), daughter of Peter the Great, was especially harsh in her policies and, upon discovering that the court physician was Jewish, ordered him to resign from the Academy of Sciences and give up his practice.

Catherine II (the Great) ruled from 1762 to 1796 and initially relaxed restrictions on Jewish merchants, realizing their importance to the Russian economy. She allowed landlords to lease distilleries and inns to Jews and permitted Jews to be elected to the merchant guilds and city councils, but denied a request to establish Jewish courts. Paul I (ruled from 1796 to 1801) was also tolerant of Jews residing in the cities and villages, opposing their expulsion.

Under Alexander I (ruled from 1801 to 1825), the enactment of 1804 was intended to integrate Jews with Russians by educating the former and leading them toward agricultural pursuits, but the authorities administering the laws used them instead to spread forcible baptism.

The reign of Nicholas I (tsar from 1825 to 1855) was more oppressive, marked by his mistrust, fanatical hatred of Judaism, and attempts to convert Jews to Christianity. Jews were restricted to a ghetto (The Pale of Settlement, created by Catherine the Great), contributing to their poverty and demoralization.

The goals of Nicholas I were to diminish the number of Jews in Russia, re-educate them to eradicate their ethnic identity, and to render them economically and morally subservient to the Christian population. He discouraged interaction between Jews and Christians and used violent means of reducing the Jewish population. He drafted large portions of Jews, including children, into military service where each was forced to serve for a period of 25 years, in an effort to remove them from Jewish influences and eventually have them baptized. In addition, Jews were required to furnish ten recruits per thousand population, while Christians only had to furnish seven. If a Jew was in arrears in tax payments, he had to furnish a number of recruits to compensate, although his debt was not then forgiven. If the required conscripts did not show up at the appointed time, two new ones

were demanded for every one that wasn't present. This resulted in the recruitment of invalids, old men and young boys.

Jewish teachers were persecuted, and uneducated Christian principals were put in charge of Jewish schools. Jews were charged double the tax of Christians but were only allowed to participate in local government to the extent of one third the total votes, and many political offices were not open to them. Many of the restrictive decrees of Nicholas I remained in force for the remainder of the Romanov dynasty.

Alexander II reigned from 1855 to 1881 and was the most benevolent of tsars, where the Jews were concerned. His goal was to integrate the Jews into the general population.[3] Upon his inauguration, he abolished the military drafting of minors at the request of The Jewish Committee.[4]

While reforms were limited and many residents still couldn't settle outside the Pale of Settlement or acquire lands beyond their homes, Alexander II made many changes. He permitted Jews to serve in local and state government and instituted the right to admittance to all schools of the empire. [5]

His assassination in 1881 began an era of pogroms and many new restrictions under Alexander III (reigned from 1881 to 1894), a fanatical anti-Semite. Among these restrictions, starting in 1882, were that: Jews could not be elected to the board of an orphanage; the number of Jewish military surgeons was restricted to 5% of the total; and the admission of Jews to the Army Medical College was at first restricted, then prohibited.

Then came the May Laws, forbidding Jews to: settle anew outside of towns and boroughs; have deeds, mortgages, leases or powers of attorney in their names; or venture outside the Pale, especially for female private teachers.

By the end of 1882, Jews were forbidden to sell liquor, enlist in the Navy, or serve in fortresses or at borders. Continuing over the course of Alexander III's reign, Jews were prohibited from: living outside the Pale even if enrolled in a university; working in a municipal police administration; having Christian servants; serving as jury foremen; being Army clerks; attending most schools, except in small quotas and only in

certain schools; settling in Finland; serving as stockbrokers, above a small percentage; practicing law; visiting Russia from another country, even for business, without special permission from the Minister of the Interior; voting; using the Yalta health resort; teaching Russian in Jewish elementary schools; transacting business in many places; and spending military furloughs outside the Pale.[6] In 1892, the Russian government even refused Baron Hirsch's offer of 20 million rubles for the higher education and technical training of Russian Jews.[7]

Under Tsar Nicholas II (ruled from 1894 to 1917), policies regarding Jews were no less oppressive. More taxes were imposed on the Jews alone. In 1897, of five synagogues in Moscow, only one remained. In 1898, more occupations were removed from the privileged artisan class, more residential restrictions were imposed, and hundreds of Jews who had lived in Kiev for many years were expelled, as they were from many towns. [8] In the first decade of the 1900's, there was a huge increase in pogroms and expulsions. As a result, in 1911, based on Russia's denial of civil rights to Jews traveling there from abroad, the United States House and Senate resolved to terminate the treaty of commerce and navigation known as The Russo-American Treaty, initially established in 1832.[9]

Count Sergei Witte, in his memoirs, recounts how, in 1905, as President of the Council of Ministers, he was charged with meeting U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt and Japanese dignitaries at the Portsmouth Conference in the U.S., to sign a treaty ending Russia's war with Japan. He toured America's east coast and was met by a number of Jews who had emigrated from Russia whom he questioned as to how they were getting along. One group, in New York, told him that they were pleased to have full rights in the U.S. and that they had no difficulty earning a comfortable living. Another group he met with, in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, included Schiff and Seligman, two bankers, and Oscar Strauss who had served as American Ambassador to Constantinople. Strauss had previously attempted to visit Russia but despite his high status and because he was a Jew, had to negotiate with Russian police, was kept under strict surveillance and was only permitted to stay a brief time. These three men urged Count Witte to end the deplorable conditions for Jews in Russia by granting them full rights. While

Count Witte was in full agreement that Russian Jews were in a difficult position, he felt that the press had exaggerated their plight and responded that an immediate and complete removal of all restrictions would do more harm than good.[10] His rationale was that it would simply increase the pogroms. And Witte was considered a proponent for the Jews!

Before Witte returned to Russia from the peace conference, President Roosevelt handed him two letters – one for Witte and one to give the Tsar. In his letter to Count Witte, Roosevelt wrote:

"In the course of our conversation, which took place last evening, I urged you to give your attention to the questions of issuing passports to respectable American citizens of the Jewish faith. It seems to me that if that could be done, there would be eliminated the last cause of irritation between these two peoples, for the perpetuation of whose historical mutual friendship I should like to do everything in my power. You can always refuse to issue a passport to some American citizen, Jew or Gentile, if you are not quite certain that the issuance of the passport will not harm Russia. But if your government found a way to permit respectable American citizens of the Jewish faith, whose intentions you do not distrust, to enter Russia, just as you permit it to respectable Americans of the Christian faith, this would be, it seems to me, in every respect fortunate."[11]

The letter addressed to Tsar Nicholas II recalled the commercial treaty of 1832 allowing American citizens free entry to Russia. The letter pointed out that Russia had been refusing admittance to American Jews, a practice which Roosevelt insisted that Russia must abandon.[12] The Tsar did not respond to this letter, but as a result, Russia's Committee of Ministers appointed a commission to study what was popularly known as "The Jewish Question", to summarize the problems of Russian Jews and the practices that Americans found offensive. Count Witte reported the necessity of equal rights without regard to faith or nationality, stating that the existing restrictions stirred discontent and alienation. Unfortunately, his recommendations were disregarded and nothing was done.[13] Rasputin was one of the few who supported Count Witte's proposals, and did what he could to keep the Count on the Committee. Despite the fact that the Dowager Empress told her son, Nicholas II, that the one person who could be useful to

him was Witte, the Tsar bristled at newspaper reports touting Witte as the one man who could save Russia. He wrote his mother that the Jewish clique, with Witte's help, was spreading chaos that he had taken great pains to weaken.[14]

In November, 1907, U.S. Secretary of War Taft (who would subsequently become President) visited St. Petersburg and prevailed upon the Tsar to allow American Jews to visit Russia. As with Roosevelt's earlier demand, the Tsar dismissed the issue. Witte points out that whenever the Council of Ministers agreed to remove certain restrictions on the Jews, the Tsar would refuse to sanction the measures, such as in 1908 when the Council passed a bill to remove educational restrictions.[15]

From 1907 on, the persecution assumed greater dimensions. Political candidates looking for a popular cause used the expulsion of Jews as their platform. In 1910 alone, there were expulsions from over 30 different cities, districts, provinces and villages, including some inside the Pale.[16] Many of these families had been living in these places their entire lives and were given a one-month or sometimes only a three-day notice to leave. When no other reason existed, the reason for driving them away was either "lack of morals" or "political unreliability", although no proof substantiated the charges. In addition, once they were driven from their homes, they were not even permitted to stay in hotels.[17]

During the course of Russian history, and especially during the reign of Nicholas II, Jews were mercilessly persecuted and restricted in every aspect of life. They were forced into lengthy military service, denied education, banned from certain occupations, restricted to living in certain areas, denied creative pursuits (such as the theater), and were generally blamed for crimes, wars and espionage. In addition, the laws were subject to wide interpretation depending on the will of the police, the ever-changing policies of the Tsar, and the changeable borders of the Pale of Settlement. At its worst, torture and senseless slaughter were the fate of a Russian Jew.

Chapter III – The Quotas and the Pogroms

Education

In the mid 1880's, since Jews comprised the majority of artisans, some technical schools were closed to them, even in the Pale, so that they wouldn't dominate the trades.[18] Desperate parents had to bribe teachers and headmasters to admit their children to schools.[19] The percentage rule began about this time. Only 10% of students in secondary schools and universities, within the Pale, could be Jewish. Outside the Pale, it was 5%, and 3% in Moscow and St. Petersburg. Many institutions were simply closed to Jews.[20] Trade schools, which were maintained by the Guild of Merchants, bore a quota in the same ratio as the number of Jewish merchants paying Guild taxes.[21] Not more than 5% of university graduates could be Jews, and to allow admission to an additional Jew beyond the quota, the Jewish community had to pay the tuition for three Christian students.[22]

Education was so cherished among Russian Jews that the number of Jewish applicants to institutions of higher learning far exceeded that of non-Jews. If they could afford it, those who were refused went to other countries for their educations. The result was that in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, there were substantially more Russian Jews in foreign universities than in Russian universities.[23]

Residence and Occupation

Residence and occupation quotas were intertwined, as occupation determined where a Jew could reside, though barred from many jobs, or only permitted in small percentages. Russian tsars historically ignored the existence of Jews in the country, although they'd been there at

least since the Middle Ages, and in the Caucasus for at least two thousand years.[24]

In 1791, Catherine (II) the Great established the ghetto called the Pale of Settlement where 95% of the Jewish population was forced to live.[25] Initially, certain classes of Jews had permission to reside in any part of Russia, but such permissions were capriciously rescinded at various times either by changing laws or the arbitrary decisions of the police. But even with such permission, such 'privileged' Jews had to maintain passports permitting them to dwell outside the Pale, and show vocational certificates proving their trade.[26]

If the law did not specifically state that Jews had a certain right, then it was assumed that they didn't. Therefore, since the law did not specifically mention female certified teachers, they were deprived of the right to free domicile. Jewish prostitutes were the only class of women who could reside anywhere. This drove many to prostitution simply so they could continue to secretly teach or study. Those who were discovered engaging in academics rather than prostitution were banished to the Pale.[27]

As mentioned previously, from the time of the May Laws in 1882, Jews were generally not permitted to own or lease land, even within the Pale, although they could be employed as agricultural laborers.[28] Any property owned or leased by Jews before the May Laws was simply confiscated afterward.[29]

A Jew could lose his privilege of residence if he sold his wares outside of his own town, or changed to another craft.[30] The son of a privileged artisan had to go to the Pale as soon as he came of age, and daughters married to non-privileged husbands could not even visit. The death of an artisan caused his wife and children to be banished to the Pale, as well.[31]

If a non-privileged relative left the Pale to visit a privileged family member, the latter would be heavily fined on the first offense and ordered back to the Pale on the second. If a privileged artisan fell sick, the police decided if he was really ill, too old, frail, or incapable of working and, if he could no longer practice his trade, he was sent to the Pale although he may have lived outside it for decades.[32]

Even within the Pale, there was little freedom. Not only did the May Laws prohibit new Jewish settlements, but from 1887, Jews were not allowed to migrate from one village to another. If a Jew went to a synagogue in another town, he was prevented from returning to his own village. Once he left the village, even within the Pale, he forfeited his right to live there.

Often, the police conducted nocturnal raids, hunting for "illegal" workers. This could mean they were practicing a different trade in addition to the one they were permitted. For example, if a watchmaker sold watch fobs, a baker sold coffee, or a butcher sold meat to a non-Jew, he would be in violation.[33] On such a raid in 1910, police ordered the expulsion of 1150 families from Kiev. Often during these nocturnal raids, the Jews who were rounded up were forced to march through the streets and were imprisoned with actual criminals.[34]

The lawyer Oskar O. Gruzenberg, in his autobiography, *Yesterday: Memoirs of a Russian-Jewish Lawyer*, illustrates how many of these laws operated in his own life. His father was an artisan, permitting the family to live outside the Pale. The senior Gruzenberg sent his sons to Russian, rather than Jewish, schools, knowing they'd have better opportunities in life. After Oskar's father died, and he and his brother were university students, they continued to live in their home until they were awakened by a raid one night. After presenting their papers, the police conceded that as students, the boys had a right to stay in Kiev, but their elderly and infirm mother did not. She was herded, along with other neighbors, to the police station where she was jailed with prostitutes and thieves.[35]

Gruzenberg studied law in order to defend such persecuted individuals and he campaigned relentlessly for equal rights, but once he completed his law degree and passed his State examinations, in 1889, a decree was passed denying non-Christians admission to the bar and profession of attorney, except with special permission of the Minister of Justice. Despite recommendations to the Minister, on Gruzenberg's behalf, by the St. Petersburg Council of the Bar, he could not get permission. In fact, during the years of that ban, not one single Jew was admitted to the bar. Gruzenberg's only recourse was to hold a position as 'lawyer-in-training', which he was forced to do for 16 years until the ban was lifted.[36]

Military

While a disproportionate number of Jews were conscripted into the army (20-35% more than their due proportion), they were excluded by law from military schools or from advancing in rank. Under Nicholas I, conscription was for 25 years and included minors.[37] The Russian Army would count dead Jews and those who had emigrated as being fit for duty in order to conscript this larger proportion of the population. If a recruit did not show up, the family was obligated to pay 300 rubles, even if proof of death or emigration was shown. In most cases, the family had to sell everything they had to pay the debt.[38] And, from 1889 on, no Jew could conduct a military band and not more than a third of the band could be comprised of Jews.[39]

Pogroms

One has only to consult Semenov's *"The Russian Government and the Massacres,"* for detailed and firsthand accounts of the numerous pogroms and incitements against Jews that took place in just the first decade of the 20th century. It is filled with the senseless horrors and tortures inflicted on Russian Jews, and includes quotes from numerous government circulars demanding the extinction of the Jewish population.

In the 17th century, pogroms claimed nearly a million Jewish lives, confirming the Russian policy of intolerance. However, the regions of Poland which were annexed to Russia contained such a large Jewish population that it was impossible to execute this policy of extermination.[40]

The tone of Nicholas II's reign is epitomized in a letter from a soldier, Ivan Iankofsky, to his father in 1905, stating:

"If you kill a Jew, it does not matter, but if you strike one and do not kill him, you are placed upon trial, for if he is killed, he will not rebel anymore. But if you have not killed him, it is yourself who are the cause of the disorder. On the 5th of May, a telegram arrived ordering us to strike every Jew we seized as much as we liked, but not to let them go alive. God! What scenes are happening in this town [Jitomir]! Day and night, they drag the killed to the cemetery, and the wounded to the hospital, and others are thrown over cliffs, and one does not even find their bones in the water. If we find a

revolver in a Jew's house, we cut off his head and hoist it on a pole and say that we have taken a Jewish flag."[41]

Though well documented in many works, Aron Simanovitch, Jewish secretary to Rasputin, describes in his memoirs the cruelty and extreme anti-Semitism of Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolayevitch who tortured, shot and hanged Jews. His generals were just as bloodthirsty. Persecution increased after General Yanushkevitch was turned down for a mortgage by a Jewish banker. However, Simanovitch describes General Ruzsky, commander-in-chief of the Sixth Army, as undertaking the most frightening slaughter of Jews in the course of his retreat in the Carpathian Mountains. He simply exterminated the Jewish population in that region.[42]

Author Andrei Amalrik describes Tsar Nicholas II as "phobic" with regard to Jews. The Tsar blamed the 1905 revolution, workers' strikes and military defeats on the Jews and ignored the efforts of cabinet ministers Count Witte and, later, Stolypin to accord equal rights to Jews. In a report, given to the Tsar by a police officer, on the devastating 1905 pogrom in Gomel (also written Homel), the Tsar is said to have responded, "How does that concern me?"[43]

Count Witte corroborates this event, adding that secret service agents and the local police chief admitted their roles in the bloody massacre and that the Tsar's comment was in response to a recommendation by the Council of Ministers that the police chief be dismissed and tried. However, as Witte states, the very groups who instigated the pogroms were those the Tsar relied upon to restore Russia's former "grandeur".[44] Witte states that the Tsar surrounded himself with Jew-haters such as those in the anti-Semitic Russian People's Union and the Black Hundreds who instigated pogroms. And whenever Witte remarked to the Tsar that the anti-Jewish riots were unacceptable, the Tsar responded that the Jews themselves were to blame. Thus, the anti-Jewish sentiment came from the upper echelons of society and was spread to the populace.[45]

Witte admits that no segment of the population was as oppressed by the administration as the Jews who could only hope to bypass some of the restrictions by means of graft, *if* they could afford it and most couldn't. It's

estimated that Russian Jewry, both inside and outside the Pale, paid 20 to 25 million rubles per year to ward off pogroms and stay in their homes.

There is some irony, too, in the post Revolutionary letters of Vyrubova and the Tsarina, when the tables were turned and they were held prisoners. With regard to receiving contraband letters and packages from friends in Siberia, Vyrubova writes that this demonstrated "that tyranny and oppression can never kill the spirit of freedom in human beings."[46] This statement could easily have been applied to those Jews confined to the Pale in tsarist Russia, or unjustly imprisoned due to discriminatory laws. She then goes on to quote a letter she received from the Tsarina when the Imperial Family was held captive in January, 1918:

"What do people live on now that everything is taken from them, their homes, their incomes, their money? What is happening is awful, the murders, the persecutions, the imprisonments…"[47]

This was exactly the treatment suffered by Jews in pogroms under her husband's regime, yet until it happened to her and those she loved, it was not a concern. Certainly, however, neither Vyrubova nor the Imperial Family deserved the harsh treatment by the Bolsheviks, but it never occurred to them that the fate they suffered had been suffered by many others before them, and for centuries.

In the fall of 1918, after being released from prison, Vyrubova describes her fear at the constant raids and looting of her home which, while certainly frightening and unjust, did not compare to pogroms where people's homes and possessions were burned to the ground and whole populations slaughtered. She complains about the Communist system of feeding the public, citing how cards were given out for free food, with the Bolshevik authorities and soldiers getting the most and best, followed by the proletariat, and lowest in priority were the former aristocrats.[48] At least they were all fed. In tsarist Russia, the poor never got free food and were left to die.

Chapter IV – Marya Rasputin's View

That Marya Rasputin would be biased in favor of her father is understandable, but as a close witness to his personal life, it's notable that her two biographies of him corroborate many of the positive traits and deeds that secretary Simanovitch and many others, including some of his enemies, describe. If we are to pay any heed to accounts by those who didn't know Rasputin and those who hated him, or to testimony extracted under duress by the secret police or the post-revolution Extraordinary Commission, it seems only fair and rational to listen to those closest to him who participated in his daily life.

In one of her books, *My Father*, Marya states that Rasputin was vehemently opposed to war in general, and risked alienating the Tsar by telling him so and advising him against it.[49] His aversion to war was due to his horror of its cruelty and pity for its victims as well as his view of war as the upheaval that would cause the fall of the empire.[50] However, once Russia was committed to war with Germany, he prayed for victory, knowing that defeat would devastate and demoralize the country.[51]

Marya confirms Rasputin's defense of the Jews, quoting him as saying:

"The blame for rebellions and political resistance lies with those who keep the people in ignorance and darkness. What misery! No hospitals, no schools, nothing but bars! Instead of organizing pogroms and accusing the Jews of all evils, we would do better to criticize ourselves."[52]

She states that he placed all people on the same level, with no concern for names or titles, and that he kissed them all and spoke to everyone in a familiar, informal manner which many of the nobility and clergy found scandalous.[53]

In 1910, he took the side of the Jews in the famous trial of several hundred dentists (which will be elaborated in Chapter IX), which

alienated many Russians and resulted in a lot of bad press.[54] We begin to see here, why the anti-Semitic Russian aristocracy would want to discredit Rasputin and begin characterizing him as evil, just as they did the Jews.

Marya tells us, corroborating Simanovitch's account, that upon Rasputin's arrival in St. Petersburg, he was initially anti-Semitic, but changed his views as he traveled, befriended Jews and learned more of their plight. When the Tsar issued a manifesto promising autonomy to Poland, Rasputin encouraged him to also grant equal rights to the Jews. Although he didn't succeed in convincing the Tsar, he still pushed the issue, risking his own favored position.[55] The fact that Nicholas II did not acquiesce to Rasputin's constant recommendations of equal rights and peace, is evidence that the latter did not have the degree of influence that is commonly suggested. In addition, we can see that the issues that he promoted are of a nature that is more humanitarian than malicious, unless of course, one comes from an anti-Semitic viewpoint.

In her last biography of her father, *Rasputin, the Man Behind the Myth*, published in 1977, Marya states that, in 1914, after Chionya Guseva attempted to assassinate her father, he never fully recovered from the wound and was often in pain. It was after this incident that he lost his empathic healing powers and began to drink, which further dulled his spiritual and psychic abilities.[56] This caused him to change his focus.

The Russian military had suffered many defeats after which, on Rasputin's advice, Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolayevitch was removed from leadership at the end of 1915, after Poland was captured by the Germans and Austrians. Marya describes how, in the course of the Russian Army's retreat from Poland, the military cruelly uprooted Jewish communities along the way, accusing them of being German spies. She states that the Jews were "attacked by disorganized mobs, although what assistance these poor homeless and hungry people could have given to the enemy was never made clear."[57]

She continues on to say, "But here was a cause for my father and, despite his pain, he threw himself into the effort with a total commitment that raised him out of the dark mood into which he had fallen [due to Guseva's attack on him]. And, for awhile, life was pleasant in the flat at 64 Gorokhovaya Ulitsa. He was powerless to stop the war, but he could do

something to save the Jews."[58] This created many more enemies for him, which was only exacerbated when he promoted a bill to be presented in the Duma, which would have protected the rights of Jews and entitled them to an education. Surely these efforts did not exactly endear him to the Tsar, nor to the nobility. In fact, in such an extremely anti-Semitic society, these efforts made him "evil."

With regard to his family and community, Marya tells us that her father was affectionate with his wife, who adored and had total confidence in him, and who was never jealous of the attentions paid him by other women. On the contrary, it was a source of pride to her. Although Rasputin lived part of each year in St. Petersburg with his two daughters, he would have had his wife stay with him, which she did for brief visits. But according to Marya, her mother preferred the simple country life and sorely missed her home when she was in Petersburg.[59] Rasputin lived in his Siberian home many months of each year and always during the harvest.

Marya also recounts that her father wasn't always serious, but was good-natured and often laughed with his children. He played soccer with them, took them for carriage rides, and accompanied them to the village festivals. In the courtyard of their Siberian home, he had built a shelter, adorned with religious icons, to house those passing through on religious pilgrimages (a common occurrence in that time).[60]

Rasputin was a good father and saw to the moral and spiritual education of his children, as well as enrolling them in the finest schools.[61] He always said good-night to his daughters, blessing them before going out, and again upon returning home when he would make the sign of the cross over them. In 1915, he returned to his home in Pokrovskoie for the summer, to oversee the construction of a school and hospital for his village, as well as to spend time with his family.[62]

Marya felt that her father's frank manner of speaking and refusal to be intimidated displeased the aristocracy as being disrespectful, and that it was due to this that they spread rumors about him being vulgar and dirty. She states:

"Because his hands were calloused, it was said that they were dirty; because his beard was bushy and his hair often fell over his forehead, he was called unkempt…"[63]

Rasputin on his farm in Pokrovskoie with his children (left to right) Matryona (Marya), Varvara (Varya), and Dmitri (Mitya)

Chapter V – Aron Simanovitch's Perspective

In his memoirs, *Raspoutine par son Secrétaire Aron Simanovitch* (a French translation of the original Russian which was titled *Rasputin and the Jews*), Simanovitch introduces himself as one of the few Jews tolerated by the royal court who, through Rasputin, was able to aid the oppressed Russian Jews and lighten their load.

He actually arrived in St. Petersburg before Rasputin did, selling jewels to the nobility. He gained access to the aristocracy by frequenting theaters, cabarets, racetracks and gambling parlors, where he developed his client list. In addition to selling jewels, he also assisted people in business affairs. Simanovitch was appalled at the ignorance of the nobles with regard to business dealings such as the establishment of credit or the purchase and sale of valuable objects.

His friendship and dealings with the Princes Wittgenstein (Gritzko and Nicholas), who were the Tsar's body guards, led to introductions to Princess Orbeliani (handmaiden to the Tsarina), officers of the Imperial Body Guard, Vyrubova, Von Dehn and many other members of the court. He was presented to the court as a jeweler and diamond connoisseur, which led to an introduction to the Tsarina. Knowing how thrifty she was, often paying for things on the installment plan, Simanovitch always sold her jewels at a very low price, to gain her favor. After each purchase, she would always consult M. Fabergé, the court jeweler, as to the fairness of the price, and he was often stunned at the bargains she received.

Simanovitch felt that Rasputin's 1905 arrival at and acceptance by the court was facilitated by the aristocracy's superstitions and ignorance, qualities which, as he noted, the nobility and the peasants had in common. The Tsar was always looking to the mystical world for answers and the Tsarina was also an adamant believer. Many spiritualists, hypnotists, astrologers, and oracles had been brought to this tsar and prior ones, long before Rasputin arrived.

Almost all of the Russian aristocracy had similar tendencies to religious mysticism. There was a constant search for miracle-makers, hermits and preachers who transmitted the word of God, absolved people of their sins, healed illness, and gave direction for the future. As Simanovitch tells it, they wanted to procure the path to heaven and their faith was often misplaced in objects, rituals and living men.[64]

Simanovitch learned that Rasputin was knowledgeable in the healing use of Siberian, Chinese and Tibetan herbs. Apparently, oak bark was an herb he often used to stem the bleeding of the hemophiliac tzarevitch, Alexei. He was also an empathic healer, able to lay his hands on the ill to alleviate their suffering.

When Simanovitch met Rasputin, he immediately saw that they could benefit each other. Rasputin received a stipend from the Department of the Interior, per the Tsar's order, according to Simanovitch, although Beletsky (director of the Department of Police) claimed Rasputin's rent was paid by Taneev (Anna Vyrubova's father), and Spiridovitch (Chief of the Tsar's Secret Police) claimed the banker Rubenstein paid his rent.[65] However, he needed someone to attend to his daily needs such as housing, food, clothing, bills, correspondence, and appointments, as he didn't concern himself with such worldly affairs. So, Simanovitch became his secretary and saw to all of his needs, as well as keeping a watchful eye over his safety. They became close friends. In the course of their relationship, he educated Rasputin about the plight of Russian Jews. With his access to the royal couple, Rasputin could obtain permission for many Jews to receive educations, occupations, and the residences of their choosing. In addition, he helped free many who had been falsely imprisoned or exiled. Petitioners (sometimes up to 200 in a day) would contact Simanovitch or line up at Rasputin's door to ask for assistance or healing. The particulars of some of these cases will be detailed in later chapters. Fuhrmann echoes many other biographers who point out that when Rasputin received petitioners, he was partial to putting Jews first, while more important people had to wait.[66]

As for Rasputin, he seemed to like Simanovitch's dignified appearance, his devotion to his Jewish heritage, and his efforts to change the Imperial family's attitude toward Jews. Above all, he was impressed that Simanovitch routinely asked rich Jews for money to help the poor.[67]

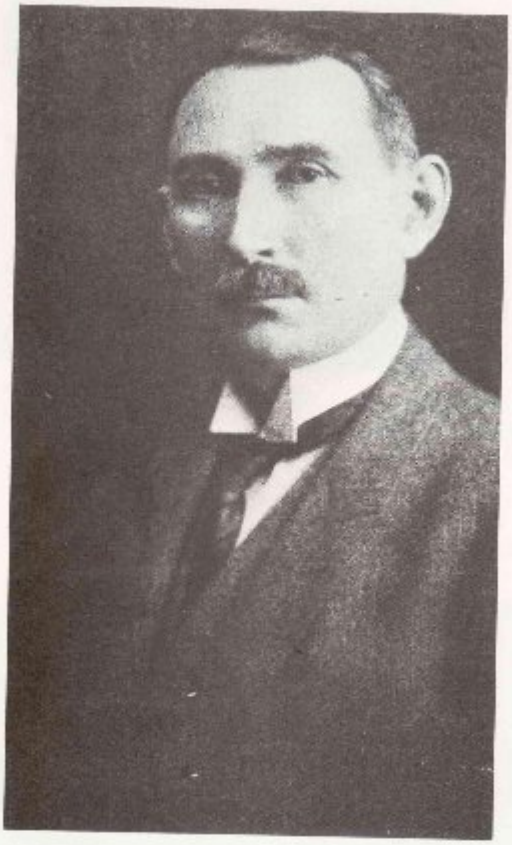
To illustrate Rasputin's forgiving nature, Simanovitch describes an assassination attempt on Rasputin by a small group of officers and young people, during a party at the Villa Rhode Restaurant. The assailants pulled out their sabers and guns, at which point Rasputin shouted, "You want to kill me!" The conspirators froze in their tracks, not able to unlock their eyes from his. Everyone was silent. Then Rasputin announced, "You *were* my enemies, but you are no more. You've seen my strength triumph. There is no power that can make you act against me again. Now, go home." They kneeled and begged his forgiveness. He just said, "Go now. You are cured. Your bad intentions are no longer."[68]

He could easily have had them jailed or even shot. Many attempts were made to assassinate him but, in each case, he forgave the assassin and refused to press charges or have them punished in any way.[69]

Beletsky, who became adjunct to the Minister of the Interior, noted that Simanovitch was close to Rasputin and his family, "jealously protecting Rasputin from dubious encounters … He is an excellent father who comports himself with dignity and who selflessly obtains the right for some of his people (Jews) to live in Moscow and St. Petersburg, with Rasputin's help."[70] After Rasputin's death, Simanovitch helped his daughters as much as he could.

Ioann Simanovitch, Aron's younger son, corresponded with author R.J. Minney in the late 1960's, from his home in Liberia, stating:

"My father's duties as Rasputin's secretary were rather unlimited: he used to read to him letters of all kinds asking for help and assistance; and also expressed his point of view on various matters. Very often my father acted as intermediary for Rasputin and talked to various high officials and their wives, all of whom wanted Rasputin to help them with various propositions; and at times it was not possible for callers to meet Rasputin without first explaining to my father what they wanted to see Rasputin about."[71]



A. Simanovitsch

Chapter VI – Rasputin, the Healer

Rasputin's ability to help the ailing tzarevitch, heir to the throne, when he suffered from bouts of hemophilia, is well documented. Simanovitch states that he primarily used herbal medicines, but sometimes he appeared to accomplish his cures empathically, by laying his hands on the boy, or merely speaking to or praying over him. There were many instances where his intervention stopped the bleeding, witnessed by many reliable sources, such as doctors, nurses, ladies-in-waiting and the Imperial couple themselves.[72]

One of those incidents occurred late in 1915 when the Tsar left Tsarskoye-Selo for General Headquarters, taking the tzarevitch Alexei with him, against Rasputin's advice and the Tsarina's wishes. About a week into the trip, young Alexei awoke one morning, bleeding from his nose. In the evening, it worsened and he contracted a fever. Two days later, they returned to the palace, the tzarevitch still bleeding profusely. Nothing the doctors tried could alleviate it. Vyrubova recounts that the Tsarina finally had her send for Rasputin. When he arrived, he blessed the tzarevitch, holding his hand. He told the Imperial couple not to worry, then left the room, collapsing into a chair, exhausted. The bleeding stopped, to the surprise of the doctors. [73]

Author Joseph Fuhrmann, in his biography of Rasputin, quotes Dr. Federov, the hemophilia specialist in charge of Alexei's medical team, as saying, "When Alexei was bleeding, I was unable to stop it with any method." Rasputin would simply look at the sick boy and, "after the very briefest of time, the bleeding would stop."[74] All of the doctors confirmed this. Olga, the Tsar's sister, was amazed after Rasputin had prayed over the tsarevitch during one terrible attack of the illness, to find the next morning that the boy wasn't just alive, but well with no pain, fever or swelling.

Simanovitch witnessed Rasputin healing migraines, fevers, and a variety of ills by laying his hands on the afflicted person. One of the most

incredible accounts is noted both in Simanovitch's memoirs and in his younger son's (Ioann's) own testimony after the revolution, in 1917, before the Extraordinary Commission. Ioann Simanovitch had always been afflicted by a neurological condition called St. Vitus' Dance. In his most extreme attacks, one side of his body would be completely paralyzed, leaving him bed-ridden. Each attack left his body weakened, with tremors, and he had difficulty walking.

Ioann stated in his testimony that Rasputin sat him down, peered into his eyes, and stroked his head whereupon he experience a strange sensation. He was there for ten minutes, after which Rasputin said, "It's all right. It will pass." Ioann never again experienced the symptoms.[75]

Aron Simanovitch also recounts how Rasputin, irritated that he couldn't find Aron for a couple of days, due to a gambling binge, cured him of gambling. Rasputin filled two glasses with wine. He told Aron to drink first from Rasputin's glass, then he mixed the wine from both glasses, and had them both drink at the same time. He then stated that Aron would never gamble again. From that day until Rasputin's death, Simanovitch never gambled although he owned a gambling parlor. When Rasputin died, however, Aron resumed gambling.[76]

Early in 1915, the Tsarina's confidante, Vyrubova, was on a train to Petersburg when it was derailed in a terrible collision, leaving many severely injured. Vyrubova had a dislocated shoulder, head and spinal injuries, and both of her legs were broken. She lay there for many hours before being transported to the hospital. She was unconscious and the doctors thought she was dying. Rasputin was notified and immediately came to her bedside. He took her hand and said to the unconscious woman, "Annushka, wake up – look at me…" To everyone's surprise, she opened her eyes, smiled, and said, "Grigory, it's you. Praise God." He turned to her caretakers and said, "She will live, but she will be crippled." He was exhausted after the session. She did live, but needed a wheelchair, and eventually crutches, thereafter.[77]

Vera Dzhanumova, wife of a wealthy Moscow merchant, wrote in her memoirs that when her daughter, in Kiev, was at death's door, Rasputin took Vera's hands. His face became yellowed and waxen. His eyes rolled up, showing only the whites. He pulled her hands and pronounced in a deep

voice, “She will not die; she will not die; she will not die.” Then, letting go of her hands, the color returned to his face and he picked up the conversation where they had left off. That very night, Vera decided to leave for Kiev to see her daughter, but received a telegram saying “Alice is much better; the fever has subsided.” Vera requested that he repeat the performance, but he told her that, since it came not from him, but from above, it was impossible. [78]

Lili Dehn, wife of the captain of the Tsar’s yacht, reported on Grigory’s healing capabilities with regard to her small son, Titi. The doctors thought diphtheria might set in and Anna Vyrubova advised Lili to call Rasputin. When he arrived, Lili asked him not to wake the boy, thinking he’d be frightened to see a stranger in his room. But Rasputin insisted that he must wake the child and did so by putting a finger on each side of the boy’s nose. Titi awoke, completely unafraid, and spoke to Rasputin using a term of endearment that children use for old people. The boy told him how badly his head ached and Rasputin told him not to worry about it. He said to Lili that the boy would be well by morning and, indeed, all the symptoms and the fever were gone. She remarks that Rasputin never received material benefits from such visits and was often not even given cab fare.[79]

There are a myriad of such stories, such as the daughter of a Siberian merchant whose eczema he cured, as well as Olga Lokhtina’s anorexia. Even his adversaries recognized his gift as a healer.[80]

Grand Duchess Olga, the Tsar’s sister, stated:

“There were thousands upon thousands of common folk who firmly believed in Rasputin’s gift of prayer and healing … There is no doubt about that. I saw those miraculous effects with my own eyes more than once. I also know that the most prominent doctors of the day had to admit it. Professor Federov, who stood at the very peak of the profession and whose patient Alexei was, told me so on more than one occasion; but all the doctors disliked Rasputin intensely.”[81]

The Tsarina’s confidante and lady-in-waiting, Anna Vyrubova, wrote:

“The Imperial Family firmly believed that they owed much of Alexei’s improving health to the prayers of Rasputin. Alexei himself believed it. Several years earlier, Rasputin had assured the Empress that when the boy

was 12 years old [that is in the summer of 1916] he would begin to improve and that by the time he was a man he would be entirely well. The undeniable fact is that after the age of twelve, Alexei did begin, very materially, to improve. His illnesses were farther and farther apart and before 1917 his appearance had changed marvelously for the better."[82]

Rasputin felt that generously using his gift of healing was a way to follow in Christ's path. Considering so many accounts of healing others (and here is but a sampling), with no recompense and exhausting himself in the process (as empathic healing consumes a great deal of energy), one is hard pressed to attribute any malicious intent to these selfless actions.

Chapter VII – Man of Faith

Like helping the poor and oppressed, or building churches, schools and hospitals, healing others is generally not the pastime of an evil human being. In fact, Rasputin felt that the healing came, not from him, but through him from God. His faith was inextricably linked to his healing abilities.

As Ternon stated in his book, *Raspoutine, Une Tragédie Russe (Rasputin, A Russian Tragedy),* Rasputin's success was based on his talents of preaching, prophesying and healing. He had little respect for the clergy and considered that all religions were valuable and were just different ways of understanding God.[83] He never claimed to be a monk or a priest and went on many religious pilgrimages, as was popular to do in his time.

The stranniks, or wandering pilgrims, were a common feature of Russian life and could often be seen on the roads going from one holy place to another. De Jonge states, "As late as 1914 Russia was still predominantly a country of illiterate peasants who lived in a way that in some respects appears closer to the Middle Ages than to the twentieth century."[84] Rasputin was more a strannik than a starets, which is a monk. He did, however perform some of the duties attributed to a starets, such as having the power to bring comfort, heal the spirit and body, and act as a spiritual guide.

In the course of his pilgrimages, a number of monasteries left Rasputin with a bad impression. Particularly shocking to him was finding monks cohabitating with women, and their brutal treatment of people of other sects. He couldn't find the answers to his questions about life, eternity and the salvation of man in these places.[85] Rasputin was critical of the monasteries, saying," If you have been good and go to a monastery, you will be corrupted. Monastic life is not to my taste. They practice violence against people there."[86]

He felt that the monks merely got fat in the monasteries and "could barely move, suffocated by their laziness." He admitted, however, that he had met some monks who had a divine spark. In the end, he

maintained that it was not he who held the highest office in the clergy, nor he with the greatest knowledge of the saints, who would reach salvation, but he who, with all his will and thought, gave himself to God. He was disillusioned by priests and bishops who catered to the rich and sought honors and higher office. In his eyes, the church had lost its purity, passion and grace.[87]

While Grigory felt the typical Russian attachment to the Orthodox Church, he also believed that the spirit of God was only to be found within oneself and that the church was not necessary to that endeavor. He did, however, strictly observe all of the holy holidays and attended church on a regular basis.[88]

To Rasputin, God was love, truth, nature and joy. Penitence, self-flagellation and monastic life, in his view, led to pride and, consequently, to the devil. Religion and joy were inseparable to him. One could pray to God through the joy of dancing or singing, rather than through a monastic life. He noted that King David danced before the Arc of the Covenant.[89]

Rasputin's religious path began relatively early, having grown up hearing the Scriptures from his father. He could quote them at length. Even as a teen he loved to talk about religion, and learn from the religious pilgrims who came through Pokrovskoie. Hospitality was always generously given to such pilgrims, in exchange for tales of their travels.

At 16, he encountered a young man who was going to be a novice at Verkhoture monastery and, intrigued, he went with him, spending four months with the monks. After returning home, he wanted to go on his own pilgrimage, but a series of unfortunate events kept him home. His mother died and, shortly thereafter, his father's house burned down. He helped his father rebuild a bigger house, then left on his trek.

He was about a hundred miles from home when, at a fair, he met Proskovia Dubrovina, a sweet understanding woman, whom he married and brought home. The next year, he was thrilled to have a son born. But at 6 months, the child died and he grieved terribly. One day, he took up his staff and put on his white robe, leaving for Verkhoture monastery, to find some answers, peace of mind and to feel closer to God. When he returned, he began to have prayer meetings, attended by many of the villagers, much to the consternation of the local priest. He left on another pilgrimage, in the course

of which many approached him asking for help for an ailing relative or child. He would pray over them, make the sign of the cross, and pronounce that the person would soon be well. He became known for his healing capabilities, long before he ever went to St. Petersburg. Those he helped often tried to touch his robe, but he would let them know that the healing was God's doing, not his.

He would often stop, in the course of his travels, to help villagers with their tasks in the fields, or to haul in fishing nets. He preached, sang sacred songs and discussed Scriptures with people. After ten months on foot, he arrived at Mt. Athos in Greece, where there were many monasteries. He only stayed a week, finding so much corruption, that it was distasteful to him. He went on to Jerusalem, relying on the kindness of local peasants, and learning the ways of different people and their beliefs. He was very moved by the Holy Land.

He returned home after two and a half years and 7,000 miles. He found he had a two-year-old son. Villagers gathered at his home, interested in the details of his travels, but first he gathered them in the courtyard to pray. The local priest was again angered and made a report of Rasputin's alleged Khlysty practices to the Bishop of Tobolsk, who sent an undercover commission to investigate. The investigators slipped in to Rasputin's meetings and found themselves very moved. They made a glowing report to the Bishop, praising Rasputin's preaching and denying any practices (orgies and self-flagellation) of the Khlysty sect.

People came from all around to see him. He was only twenty-three at the time, but stories of his inspirational preaching and miraculous healing gift had spread far. His name was known over much of the Russian Empire before going to St. Petersburg. He stayed home for a year, and then left on another pilgrimage to Kiev and Kazan. Upon returning home, he had a daughter, Matryona (Marya). Again he was thrilled. Rasputin stayed home for a year, during which time he occupied himself with evening services and healing the sick. Before he left again, his wife gave birth to their third child, Varvara (Varya), in 1897.

On his journeys, he gave hope to the downtrodden and tried to inspire them. He helped the needy whenever he could. He traveled farther into Siberia where the peasants flocked around him, asking for his blessing.

He illustrated his preaching with examples from his own experience and would sometimes become so enraptured that he would sing and dance.

Unfortunately, his hometown priest, Father Piotr, whom Grigory had angered for having his own services, began to spread rumors to discredit him, asserting that Rasputin indulged in Khlysty practices, held orgies and was a drunkard (he did not drink at all at this point in his life). There was no evidence to support these rumors. They were obviously the fabrications of a jealous priest. And thus began the malicious rumors that were later taken up by the aristocracy when they found that Rasputin would not be used as a means to their own ends.

There's been much debate about his association with the Khlysty sect, also called "flagellants", a group which believed in self-flagellation and that one must sin to gain salvation, holding orgies to first sin. He investigated this group, as he did all religions he came across, but was not a member, as many of the St. Petersburg clergy testified. Bonch-Bruevich, a researcher and authority on religious matters, formally concluded in 1912, after many interviews with Rasputin, that he had nothing to do with any sects, especially not the Khlysty. He found that Rasputin accepted the sacraments, rites and dogma of the Orthodox Church, that he practiced a literal interpretation of the Bible, that he liked the "true" liturgy, and honored the icons. Many others corroborated this. Among the Khlysty, only the initiates are admitted to the ceremonies. Rasputin always invited everyone to his prayer meetings. The flagellants refused marriage and the birth of children. Rasputin had a wife his entire life, with whom he had three children (in addition to their first who died at 6 months). Among the Khlysty, only members could find salvation. For Rasputin, anyone who believed in God could be saved.[90]

Elizabeth Judas, author of *Rasputin – Neither Devil Nor Saint*, claims she knew Rasputin from the time she was 9, in 1905, until his death, when she was about 20. He met her family in Tobolsk (before he became part of the Tsar's Court), charged with driving them by horse drawn wagon to her aunt and uncle's Siberian estate. It was a long journey over the course of which there was much opportunity for discussion. She remembered him asking if she prayed and for whom. When she replied that she prayed for the Tsar, he told her that everyone prays for the Tsar but should instead pray for the poor and disabled. At one stop on the journey, when Judas picked some

wildflowers, Rasputin told her that it was cruel to take life by force and that life could only be taken be He who gives it.[91]

In 1907, Olga, the Tsar's youngest sister, during a visit to the palace, watched Rasputin with the royal children and reported: "I felt that gentleness and warmth radiated from him. All the children seemed to like him. I still remember their laughter as little Alexei, deciding he was a rabbit, jumped up and down in the room. And then, quite suddenly, Rasputin caught the child's hand and led him to his bedroom and we three followed. There was something like a hush, as though we found ourselves in church. In Alexei's bedroom, no lamps were lit; the only light came from candles burning in from of some beautiful icons. The child stood very still by the side of that giant, whose head was bowed. I knew he was praying. It was all most impressive. I also knew that my little nephew had joined him in prayer. I really cannot describe it – but I was then conscious of the man's sincerity."[92]

With regard to Rasputin's piety, Anna Vyrubova described, in her memoirs, her stay, in 1909, with his family at his Siberian home. Upon arriving, she was warmly greeted by Rasputin's wife. She noted that living with them were their three children and two servants, as well as Rasputin's father, who was a fisherman (as well as a carter and farmer). She saw many religious icons in the home. At night, they all gathered in front of the icons and sang religious songs. They then went to the edge of the river where they caught huge quantities of fish, while singing psalms and praying. She noted that Grigory and his family worked from morning until night either in the fields or in the house.[93]

General Spiridovitch wrote that, in Rasputin's circle of followers, he spoke of religious questions, went to church with them, and discussed how to live a pious life. His reputation for religious teachings and predictions was spread throughout St. Petersburg thanks to this circle of society women.

Prince Dzhevakov (Zhevakov) transcribed a talk Rasputin gave at the home of Baron Rausch von Traubenberg where he spoke of studying the lives of saints and the deeds that led them to become saints:

"In God is salvation. Without God, it's impossible to take a step. We see God when we see nothing else around us. Evil and sin come from everything

that hides God from us. The room you're in, the work you do, the people around you, all hide God from you because you don't live or think in a pious way. What can you do to see God? After mass, after having prayed, leave town … and go to the country. Walk … walk straight ahead until you can no longer see behind you the black cloud of factory smoke, and in front of you is nothing but the clear blue horizon. Then stop and reflect on yourselves – how very small, insignificant and powerless you are. And, with your soul's eye, you'll see the capital transform into an ant farm, and the men into busy little ants. Then, what becomes of your pride, your self-love, your power, your rights, your situation …! And you will feel miserable, useless, abandoned by all. And you'll raise your eyes to the sky, and you will see God. And in all of your heart, you'll feel you have only one father – God. And you'll feel a great tenderness. That's the first step toward God. You can then go further, but come back into the world, taking up all of your former activities, while keeping sight of what you brought back with you. That tenderness you felt is God in your soul. And if you preserve that, then you transform all your earthly work into divine work and you will save your soul, not by penitence, but by working for the glory of God."[94]

Prince Nicholas Dzhevakov's account is meaningful because he initially was not at all impressed by Rasputin and thought his followers to be a bunch of lunatics. But after this sermon on bringing God into one's everyday life, Dzhevakov admitted that, although Rasputin didn't say anything new, he showed the practical application of holy teachings. Dzhevakov stated, "I have heard many sermons which were substantial and deep, but my memory has not retained a single one. Rasputin delivered his sermon fifteen years ago. I recall it even now."[95]

Chapter VIII – Rasputin's Politics

War

Simanovitch felt that although Rasputin was uneducated and nearly illiterate, he possessed a lucid intelligence, an enormous will, a profound knowledge of men, and the gift of foresight. General Alexandre Spiridovitch, chief of the Tsar's secret police, quoted Count Witte (Minister of Finance 1905-1906) as saying of Rasputin: "You can't imagine what great intelligence this remarkable man has. He understands, better than anyone, Russia and its spirit, feelings, and aspirations. He knows by a sort of intuition."[96] This statement was made to A. V. Osmolovski in 1914, during the war with Germany. Witte had remarked that there was only one man who could untangle that fiasco of a war, and when he revealed that that man was Rasputin, Osmolovski scoffed, asserting that the peasant was too ignorant to understand diplomacy and politics. This prompted Witte's defense of Rasputin's political astuteness.[97]

Rasputin was a spokesman for immediate peace and was of the opinion that even a bad peace, based on conditions unfavorable to Russia, would be paradise compared to the consequences of war. If Russia had to assume all obligations and pay for herself and her allies, then paying the bill for peace was the sacrifice that had to be made to end war. He was generally against bloodshed and even wanted to abolish the death penalty, believing that many of the condemned were innocent. [98]

Biographer Fuhrmann finds Rasputin's views on war to be insightful. Grigory felt that Russia had enough problems to solve at home and that these would only be multiplied by entering into war with other countries.[99]

Rasputin declared, in 1913, before the outbreak of World War I, "War is a bad thing and Christians are heading straight toward it, rather than follow a path of humility. In general, war is not worth it, taking from people their lives and earthly goods, violating the law of Christ and killing their own

souls. What does it do for me if I fight with you, if I subdue you; afterward, I must look over my shoulder, in fear of you and what you might do to me. That is by the sword; but I can always take you in Christ's love, and I have nothing more to fear."[100]

Vyrubova stated in her memoirs that, at the start of the war with Germany, in 1914, when Rasputin was in the hospital recovering from Guseva's assassination attempt, he sent two telegrams to the Tsar. The first pleaded with Nicholas II not to declare war, and the other stated that war would signal the end of the Tsar's reign and the end of Russia. From his hospital bed, on the eve of the war, Rasputin wrote the Tsar: "Dear Friend, I will say once more, a terrifying dense cloud is hanging over Russia. Immense sorrow and chagrin – long dark night on a sea of unlimited tears. And soon blood? What can I say? I cannot find words. Indescribable horror. I know everyone advises you to go to war. They don't know it will lead to ruin. God's punishment is hard. When intelligence is gone, it's the beginning of the end. You are the Tsar, father of the people. Don't favor the demented and lose all of that and your people. Even if Germany is conquered, what of Russia? There is no greater victim – she is soaked in blood. Great is this disaster. Endless sorrow. Grigory."[101]

According to Vyrubova, the Tsar tore up these telegrams and, for a while, was somewhat cold toward Rasputin.[102]

She also wrote that, in 1912, during the Balkan conflict, Rasputin was on his knees begging the Tsar not to get involved, saying that it would bring the country great sorrow.[103] In an interview, he stated, "There was the war in the Balkans. And the newspapers all shouted: Long live the war; long live the war! They called for war and fanned the flames. And I asked them: Sirs! Why do you do that? Don't you see that it's bad? You must tame your passions, whether it's a dispute or a war, and don't fuel the fire of anger and hate. And God – do you think he doesn't see and doesn't know?"[104]

With regard to the Balkan Wars, he declared: "A monument, a real monument, ought to be erected to those who have acted to avoid Russia's participation in the war. And the politics of peace, the anti-war politics, should be honored as wise and high-minded."[105] In the same manner, he persuaded the Tsar not to enter into war when, in 1908, Austria annexed Bosnia-Herzegovina.

In 1914, however, with Rasputin in the hospital, he couldn't be there to prevent the Tsar from entering into war with Germany. Rasputin, along with Prince Meschersky, Count Witte, and Minister of the Interior Durnovo, were all in full agreement that the war would lead the tsarist regime to ruin. Vyrubova recalled that Rasputin often told Their Majesties that war would finish them and Russia. Rasputin maintained that alliances were only beautiful in the absence of war and, if others fight, "that is their misfortune and blindness. They will find nothing and will only quickly kill each other off. As for us, loving and calm, looking within ourselves, we will be above it all."[106]

In 1914, Rasputin proposed delaying the conscription of young military recruits until late September, so that farmers could be helped by their sons during the harvest. (Rasputin himself always went to his Siberian home to help with the harvest.) This aided not only those families, but the country as well. Provisions were one of Rasputin's primary concerns – for the country and the soldiers.[107]

In this same year, Purishkevitch, a founder of the anti-Semitic Union of Russian People, severely reprimanded Rasputin for bringing aid to the poor Jews of Siberia and taking steps to have Jewish merchants admitted to the Nijni-Novgorod Fair.[108]

Ternon, in his book, *Raspoutine, Une Tragédie Russe (Rasputin, A Russian Tragedy)* investigated Rasputin's war time counsel to the Tsar and found it to be full of common sense. Generally, Rasputin advised patience, conservation of the army's strength, the avoidance of needlessly sacrificing lives, and the spillage of as little blood as possible. In 1915, he was against calling second class reservists to the front, viewing it as a suicide mission, since there were no weapons for them. He also alerted the Tsarina to the meager food supply in Petersburg and Moscow, proposing that food shipments take priority on the trains, over passengers and all other shipments. In addition, he suggested strict measures against the rising prices that merchants were charging for the scarce food supply. The Tsarina faithfully transmitted all of these recommendations to the Tsar, but to no avail.[109]

Michel de Enden, in his book *Raspoutine*, not only detailed the same advice that Ternon noted, but added (and is documented in other sources) that despite the government's vast profits from the sale of vodka,

Rasputin advised the Tsar to shut down these stores, as drinking wasn't healthy for the people, non-productive to the soldiers, and was the cause of much misery for the less fortunate social classes.[110]

In 1914, not only did Rasputin tell Nicholas II that his advisors did not see the gravity of the consequences of war with Germany, but letters from the Tsarina to the Tsar also express Rasputin's concern for the Tartars who were expelled from the Crimea by the province's governor.[111]

In addition to Rasputin's previously mentioned war time counsel, Amalrik points out that, in order to preserve the monarchy, he recommended that the Tsar visit the troops, the general population, and the workers in the factories, so that they would feel that the Tsar cared about them and their efforts. Rasputin felt that by lifting the spirits of the people, they in turn would support the Tsar.[112] This common-sense advice, too, was ignored.

From May through November of 1915, Russia suffered numerous defeats in the war. The total loss for Russians from the beginning to the end of the war amounted to four million lives. Since no one dared blame the military chiefs, blame rested on the Tsarina (simply for being of German descent), on the Tartars of the Crimea, on Russians of German descent, and on the Jews. In the prior year, the military began taking Jewish hostages living near the front, following the burning of their houses and possessions. Any hostile activity from the general population resulted in the hostages being shot. Later, there were immediate expulsions of all Jews living in the regions near the front. These refugees were not well received by the inhabitants of the areas they were pushed into, and were made to live in disgraceful conditions. This only increased the chaos. The Tsarina wrote the Tsar, "Watch that these stories about the Jews are kept quiet, so as not to provoke further disorder in the country." Subsequently, the Council of Ministers was forced to disband "the line of residence" east of which Jews had not been permitted to reside. In doing so, they hoped to make a good impression on their foreign allies, in order to obtain a loan.[113]

The soldiers serving in the Russian army were looked upon as sub-human and treated poorly. In early 1916, soldiers were no longer allowed to be in restaurants, read newspapers (except with special permission) or take the streetcar.[114] Rasputin begged Vyrubova to take

this up with the Tsarina, noting that they often had to travel long distances in the severe cold. Later that year, he also asked the Tsarina to prevail upon the Tsar not to raise streetcar fares (they were to be doubled), as it was unjust to the poor who often needed to take the streetcar several times a day.[115]

Rasputin's deep-seated pacifism, which many wrongly viewed as treason, came from a desire to protect the masses from suffering.[116] He truly felt, in addition, that peace would preserve the monarchy. Rasputin and Cabinet Minister Sturmer both agreed that the Tsar was the greatest obstacle to peace and many witnesses have confirmed that the former repeated often that the killing had gone on long enough and that the Tsar needed to end it rather than thinking of his promises to his allies.[117]

With regard to politics and war, Grigory was not concerned with triumphs and defeats, unlike the politicians. He was concerned with the effect of political actions on the general populace and whether they would gain anything. Any act resulting in hunger, homelessness, torture or death was unacceptable to him, and he mourned the fact that, in many cases, the clergy didn't come to the aid of the needy victims of such actions.[118]

Minorities

While some of Rasputin's counsel was war-related, the rest concerned the welfare of minorities. Rasputin denounced the persecution of Jews, Tartars and Germans living in Russia. He was also in favor of independence for Poland.[119] Ternon's analysis of the time was that Russian nationalism was fueled by rampant, deeply ingrained anti-Semitism that simply could not be shaken. The Jew was seen as a foreigner and Russians were obsessed with the fear that there was a Jewish conspiracy to conquer the world. This prejudice fed the myth that all Jews were spies for Germany. This national fever of anti-Semitism linked the Jews ("enemies" inside the borders) and the Germans (enemies outside the borders) with the Tsarina (who was German) and Rasputin (the Tsarina's spiritual advisor) who campaigned for Jewish rights. This fallacious logic led many aristocrats to believe that the Tsarina, Rasputin, and the Jews were all spies.[120]

Simanovitch also recounts that Rasputin didn't approve of the government's policies regarding minorities, and often railed against the

tendency toward national chauvinism.

"What is this?" he would say, "Cutting the Tartars' throats, bayoneting the Armenians, stabbing the Georgians, and slicing open the stomachs of Jews? Who needs this carnage? The Tartar? The Armenian? The Georgian? The Jew? There should not be a difference in the eyes of the Tsar; they should all be equal before him. One can be a tsar over many people, but one cannot force them to change religions. It is a great, great sin. Each believes in God, but in what way? That is his own affair. Every man who has faith is a good man, and one must love him."[121]

Despite the Tsar's anti-Semitism and constant complaints about and paranoia of Jews, as well as his membership in the League of Russian People, which ordered the pogroms, Rasputin became a friend and protector to the Jews and supported Simanovitch's efforts toward equal rights.[122] He did not openly attack the anti-Semitic organizations which the Tsar supported, but didn't hesitate to point out their faults to him.[123] This is part of the 'terrible' and 'evil' influence that the nobility feared Rasputin had over the Tsar. In addition, it's evident that Rasputin's influence over the extremely anti-Semitic Tsar was minimal in this arena. However, he kept trying to sway the Tsar's opinion, again, at great risk to his own position.

Rasputin dreamed of a monarchy where the peasants formed the dominant ruling class. He felt that state and church lands should be shared with the peasants, especially the nomadic ones. But, above all, he wanted the peasants to have political influence equal to that of the nobility. He was actively interested in the problems of all minorities in the country, having come to know many of them in the course of his pilgrimages. He saw German colonies, Tartar villages, Polish Jews, Georgians and Armenians. He energetically took on the cause of oppressed people.

"We are all equal in front of God," he used to say. He was for the abolishment of all restrictions on minorities and hoped to realize this goal once the war ended.[124] Fuhrmann corroborates Rasputin's sympathy for other faiths and finds it remarkable that he became an outspoken advocate for equal rights for Jews, at a time when this cause was so unpopular.[125]

Judas also notes that Rasputin was deeply concerned with those who were persecuted by the government, and that he openly criticized the priests of the Russian Orthodox Church for not showing any interest in their

situation or in people of other denominations. He felt that such disregard of people of other faiths went against Christ's teachings.[126]

Rasputin foresaw a vast plan for agrarian reform, stating: "The peasants are free, it is true, but they do not own enough land. The peasant generally has a large family, about ten children, but the strip of land accorded him is very small. The sons argue with the father that their little field will someday have to be shared and is already stretched too thin. Many go to the city to earn money, but find no work. When the war ends, our sons will return home and marry. But how will they live? There will be conflict and agitation. The Russian peasant receives nothing and must pay hefty taxes. His property can be seized and sold, down to his last cow. If the peasant has no land, no life is possible for him."[127]

Rasputin's plan, as he proposed it to the Tsar, was this: "You must borrow foreign money. Buy back all the land owned by the nobility. Divide it amongst the peasants. Create communal schools in the teachers' homes. You will deprive no one. Everyone will be happy and living in peace – the nobles with their money and the peasants with their land."

His idea was to lessen the nobility's influence on the Tsar, so that the Tsar could bond with his people. "Which is worth more to you?" he asked the Tsar. "One hundred fifty *thousand* rich land owners or one hundred fifty *million* rich peasants? Let the landowners take their money and build factories or traffic in commerce."[128]

Rasputin advocated a trans-Siberian railroad and saw the government's refusal to build one as another way to keep the peasants in their place. He complained to Simanovitch:

"They are afraid of the train and the changes it will bring. They fear that the train will taint the peasant. That is stupid! The train can help the peasant better himself. Without the train, he must stay in his corner of the world, since one cannot run around Siberia on foot. He does not hear the news of other places. Can you call that a life? The peasants' children so rarely see white bread that it's considered a gourmet item. The men of the fields have nothing. They only have wheat flour at Easter. Even on holidays, they only eat meat in small quantities. Clothing and shoes are all lacking and they can do nothing about it since there are no artisans out in the country. There is a fear of seeing the peasant grow accustomed to a comfortable life, chase

money and demand his share of the land. They say it will lead to revolution! This is sheer nonsense. The nobility has far more than their fair share. They do nothing but put sticks in the wheel spokes of others who want to do something for themselves. If they find an educated man who wants to undertake some enterprise, they treat him as a revolutionary. They cry from the rooftops that he is a rebel and throw him in prison. They do not want schools; they want to keep the peasants in ignorance. The politics of these aristocrats will lead to no good."[129] And, indeed, he was right.

While Michel de Enden's biography is, on the whole, not particularly favorable to Rasputin, he nevertheless spends a couple of chapters on what he called Rasputin's "tenderness, generosity, and concern for the interests of the people." He admits that Rasputin generally appeared to be preoccupied with measures that contributed to the well-being of the people, and he quotes Soviet historian M.N. Pokrovski (whose works date in the 1920's and 30's) as saying that Rasputin's common sense and knowledge of the realities of life often aided the Tsar.[130]

Sir Bernard Pares who was the tzarevitch's tutor (and later professor of Russian history at London University), stated that Rasputin often confronted the Tsar with ideas that the latter would never have accepted, such as lifting the restrictions on Russian Jews and laws to aid the poor peasantry.[131]

General Spiridovitch also wrote that Rasputin showed a "very Christian tolerance for all religions in general." He confirms that Rasputin worked doggedly on lifting the restrictions on Jews, to put them on an equal footing with other Russian subjects, endlessly discussing the topic with the Tsar. Spiridovitch also quotes the Jewish attorney Genrikh Sliosberg as having heard Rasputin say to the Tsar, "I wouldn't be Rasputin if I didn't ask you to give Jews the right to reside where they wish."[132]

Rasputin was a democrat, not simply in terms of social or economic equality, but because he recognized the value of each human being and his right to an independent existence: all are equal before God and the Tsar. He knew what it was to be discounted and treated with disdain. Trufanov recounted the example of a dinner Rasputin was invited to where, before being seated, the hostess had prepared a separate room for a bishop to wash his hands, but sent Rasputin to the kitchen to wash his.[133]

Rasputin bristled at the aristocracy's extravagance. Bonch-Bruevich, an expert on Russian sectarianism, described Rasputin's entrance to a reception in the home of Baroness Ivanovna Ikskul. He strode into the home, looking at the art on the walls, and approached the Baroness, saying, "Listen, little mother, your walls are hung with works like a real museum. With just one of these, you could feed five hungry villages. It's a pleasure to see how one lives here while over there little peasants die of hunger." [134]

Although Rasputin was said to have psychic capabilities, and many of his predictions did come true, it does not take a psychic to foresee that the extreme oppression of a large population will eventually lead to agitation and revolution. Rasputin's politics, simple and naïve as they were, had the goal of providing plenty for the masses. Had the Tsar followed Rasputin's advice of equal rights, peace, and opportunities for all, revolution may well have been avoided.

Women

While it's often asserted that Rasputin had flings with women of all social classes (and many threw themselves at him), Simanovitch felt that women were attracted to him more for the consideration he showed them than for his physique. There is, however, no confirmation of the accusations of promiscuity. He not only loved women but sympathized with them, helped them, and defended their interests. When women came to Rasputin complaining of miserable lives due to tyrannical husbands, he recommended a rapid divorce and would see to it that the trial process was simplified and resolved in the woman's favor.

"If a woman wants a divorce," he would say, "she must have her freedom immediately, because life as a couple is unbearable to her. If the husband wants a divorce, generally he is lying or cheating. He doesn't want to feed his wife and children, or has a mistress."[135] Many women came to Rasputin for help with a divorce. He always cut through the bureaucracy to help them, as well as instructing his banker friends to assist them financially, if needed.

"It's a great sin to wrong women," he said. "A man can be a swindler in politics, business, or trade, but he must always be honest and noble with women."

And he apparently hid nothing from his wife, as Simanovitch and Marya remark that she, on her rare visits to St. Petersburg (she managed their farm in Siberia), appeared flattered by the attentions paid to him by the aristocratic ladies. When Simanovitch asked if she wasn't jealous, she merely smiled and said that he had plenty of love to go around.[136]

Vyrubova, who often saw Rasputin and was part of the religious circle that met at his apartment, stated that she never met nor knew Rasputin to have a mistress, nor did any of the other ladies in their circle. She and the others went to hear him speak, as he knew all of the scriptures by heart, and enjoyed discussing them.[137]

In his memoirs, Rodzyanko, last President of the Duma, who despised Rasputin, claimed to have boxes full of letters from mothers whose daughters were 'dishonored' by the man of God. However, for a man bent on destroying Rasputin, it is odd that he never produced those letters. In addition, it's somewhat suspect that the mothers of these women would write to the Duma President, rather than call the police. The biographer, Roullier, asserts that these letters never existed and were merely a fabrication of Rodzyanko's.[138] There is, at any rate, no evidence to substantiate them.

Only two women have ever come forward with accusations of sexual impropriety. One was the governess of the Tsarina's children, Sophie Tutchev. This governess had been recommended by Grand Duchess Elizabeth, the Tsarina's sister, who hated Rasputin. Tutchev spread rumors about him being a Jew, as well as accusations of sexual improprieties, though she had never met him. Authors Judas, Vyrubova and others recount that Tutchev accused Rasputin of molesting the Tsar's children and having an affair with the Tsarina. She was fired when the Imperial children, frightened, told the Tsarina that the governess tried to turn them against their own mother. The governess had an agenda, supported by others in the anti-Rasputin camp.

The other woman who made accusations was the maid who was under direct supervision of the governess. These same two women also accused Vyrubova of being Rasputin's mistress (she was medically determined to be a virgin), and of attempting to poison the Tsar and tzarevitch, so that the Tsarina could govern on her own. These accusations

are radically opposed to all accounts by those who were there, as well as the writings of reliable biographers.[139]

In fact, as a testament to his sensitivity to women, it's notable that, in 1915, while on his farm in Siberia, Rasputin was shocked to see that a great number of women had been sent there to work, without being told how long they'd be there. None of them had brought warm clothes. He was also outraged that the women were only paid one day's wage for the five day journey.[140]

A journalist quoted Rasputin as saying that men have occupations that focus them on the outside world, while women tend to reside within themselves and are more aware of the suffering of their souls. "I speak to them and they feel better. I speak in all simplicity, as God inspires me. People accuse me, asking why I am always with women. But isn't a woman a human being? And why shouldn't one love them? Don't they also suffer and want to be consoled? They can't understand that a woman can be loved in more ways than one."[141]

The author Amalrik quotes B.N. Smitten who interviewed hundreds of people who knew Rasputin and who wrote: "Conversation with him almost always elevated and stimulated the soul. To those who were suffering, he brought courage, hope, consolation and joy. An intelligent and sensible man, he knew how to reduce the suffering of others and, with the aid of a comparison or opportune words, he soothed or even rid others of their pain."[142]

Vasily Shulgin, a monarchist leader, recounted that a friend of his had lost two children, one after the other, and that his wife was so inconsolable, that she was on the verge of insanity. The doctors were powerless to do anything for her and she was advised to see Rasputin. Her husband stated, "Imagine, he spoke to her for a half hour and completely eased her mind. Whatever else they say about him, it is also true that he saved my wife."[143]

In the course of a couple of decades, thousands of women, from the poorest peasant to the Tsarina, sought consolation from him.

Political Attitudes

Amalrik summarizes Rasputin's advice to the Tsar as falling into four categories: saving the monarchy; social measures; political appointments of cabinet ministers and department chiefs; and conduct regarding the war.[144]

The Tsar often sought Rasputin's counsel when naming cabinet ministers. Rasputin would choose candidates who were anti-war and for equal rights for minorities.[145] Those who became cabinet ministers with Rasputin's help originally promised to abolish laws restricting the rights of those minorities, and advocate for peace. However, once in office, they often didn't have the courage to keep their promises.[146]

The only other problem with this was that Nicholas II often disregarded the advice of his ministers who were endlessly conspiring against each other. The Russo-Japanese War in 1904 was an example of this. Sergei Witte, an experience minister, was against war, but Plehve (Minister of the Interior) felt that "a small victorious war" would distract the repressed population enough to avoid a revolution. Plehve, a staunch anti-Semite, took a series of repressive actions. In Ekaterinoslav, peasants were brutally flogged; there were numerous pogroms against Jews. Plehve opposed the reforms of the elected county councils that had been instituted by Alexander II, Nicholas II's grandfather. When Witte warned Plehve that his actions would result in his assassination, the Tsar dismissed Witte from his post. Plehve was killed by an assassin several months after the start of the Russo-Japanese War. The defeats Russia suffered only led to riots, strikes and assassinations. Ultimately, Witte was sent to represent Russia in a peace treaty with Japan, brokered by U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt, which he did successfully, earning him the title of "Count".[147]

With regard to Rasputin's political attitudes, Simanovitch states: "…Rasputin never forgot he was a peasant. He never pursued fame or glory, nor did he want an official appointment … and he never lost sight of his millions of Russian brothers, dispersed in villages throughout the immense empire. To come to their aid and break down the wall between them and the Tsar was his most ardent desire and the goal toward which he worked with all of his soul's strength."[148]

Rasputin's primary fashion of gaining his political ends, when legislative reforms were not forthcoming, was money. He felt that war could be avoided by paying off the aggressors, or that the oppressed could gain

educations, occupations or domiciliary rights by paying off the appropriate officials.

With regard to the issue of money, Vyrubova stated that money played no role in Rasputin's life. Whenever he was given any, he distributed it to the less fortunate. She also recounted that, in 1913, Minister of Finance Kokovtsev, who hated Rasputin, offered him 200,000 rubles to leave Petersburg forever. Insulted, Rasputin replied that if "Mama" (the Tsarina) and "Papa" (the Tsar) wanted him to go, he would, but that it was not necessary to try to corrupt him.[149]

Roullier, in his book, also notes that although millions of rubles changed hands at Rasputin's apartment, which often looked like a welfare office, he kept none of it because he never turned down those in need. People came from all over Russia seeking help and none of them left empty-handed. Rasputin was concerned with victims of injustice, taking the part of the poor over the rich, and the helpless over the powerful. When he had no more money to give, he demanded that the rich empty their pockets to help the poor.[150]

The French ambassador to Russia, Maurice Paléologue, stated that while many nobles, including the Imperial couple, lavished money on Rasputin, he dispersed it in a variety of ways, giving much to the poor, and building a church in his village of Pokrovskoie. [151]

De Jonge notes that it was remarkable that Rasputin was not at all motivated by financial greed, considering that bribery was an integral part of Russian life. He points out that provincial administrators received no salary before the eighteenth century and were expected to live on bribes. The practice, however, continued into the twentieth century but Rasputin enjoyed distributing money, not accumulating it.[152]

In her memoirs, Vyrubova agrees, noting that Rasputin could have commanded huge sums of money for his prayers and counsel, and she too finds his disinterest in money extremely unusual in a country so rife with graft, blackmail and greed.[153]

Chapter IX – Protector of the Jews

Rasputin always came to the defense of those persecuted because of their faith, whether members of various sects, Muslims or Jews. [154] Simanovitch, his secretary, tells of many incidents where he called upon Rasputin to come to the assistance of Russian Jews (author Radzinsky alludes to these, but does not give specifics, while many other authors substantiate the details). In 1915, Russia's numerous defeats in the war against Germany were blamed on the Jews, who were assumed to be spies. It was a dangerous time for Jews to be in the military (or anywhere) and, through Rasputin, Simanovitch managed to exempt many Jews from serving in the army.

Accusations of espionage needed no proof, such as in Dvinsk where several Jews were hanged for spying, but were later found to be innocent. Many Jews, at this time, were being evicted from St. Petersburg, but Simanovitch thwarted many of these cases by having Rasputin appeal to the Tsarina.[155]

During this era of evictions and accusations of espionage, the banker Gunzburg prevailed upon Simanovitch to use his influence, via Rasputin, to help stop the persecution. Gunzburg offered the financial resources of his cohorts to help Rasputin attain this goal. Rasputin met with Gunzburg and other eminent Jews, but his solution was to bribe officials to solve their problems, since legislation was unlikely. He said to keep him informed and to submit a list of cabinet candidates who might be sympathetic to their cause. The group presented their list which Rasputin gave to the Tsar, while reminding him of the plight of the Jews.[156] Apparently, his words fell on deaf ears.

In another incident, Simanovitch, having met with many representatives of the Jewish cause, had Rasputin arrange a meeting between the Tsar and a delegation comprised of the lawyers Gruzenberg and Sliosberg, as well as a deputy to the Duma, Friedmann. But the Tsar refused

to see them because they were lawyers and 'revolutionaries'. After consulting with the Tsar to find who would be acceptable, Rasputin suggested the Gunzburgs and Brodsky, a Kiev sugar manufacturer. However these three declined the offer to speak to the Tsar, probably out of fear of calling attention to themselves, so no meeting took place.

These men did, however, meet with Rasputin to recount the atrocities committed by the Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolayevitch, who seemed bent on exterminating the Jews. After listening, and appearing quite moved, Rasputin vowed that, within ten days, Nikolai Nikolayevitch would be relieved of his command, stating that perhaps then they could move toward equal rights. The delegation deposited 100,000 rubles in the bank – 50,000 for each of Rasputin's daughters. Before ten days had gone by, the Grand Duke was relieved and sent to command troops in the Caucasus Mountains. [157] Of course, there were other reasons for getting rid of the Grand Duke, who hated Rasputin for not supporting his agendas and had threatened to hang him if he showed up at the front. In addition, Nikolai Nikolayevitch felt that the Tsarina held too much power. She, in turn, caught wind of a plot by the Grand Duke to overthrow Nicholas II and have her banished to a convent. Therefore, the Tsarina encouraged her husband to thwart those efforts by removing him of his command.

Simanovitch was Rasputin's connection to the Jewish bankers. Dmitry Lvovitch Rubinstein was the most successful one, defying oppressive restrictions to become a banker and chairman of the board of the Franco-Russian Bank. His doctorate in law helped him use loopholes in the legal code to keep his position and advance himself. Rubinstein tried to acquire a controlling share in The New Times, an anti-Semitic newspaper, but the son of the deceased owner declared it "an attempt by international Jewry to take possession of the Russian press."[158] That attempt thwarted, he pursued the civil rank of Actual State Councilor (similar to the military rank of general), while remaining an orthodox Jew. To facilitate obtaining this position, Rasputin suggested a donation to the builder, Loman, for the construction of homes near the Feodor Cathedral. When questioned later by the Extraordinary Commission, Loman testified having declined the donation knowing that a Jew couldn't obtain such a rank. Rubinstein pressed Rasputin

on the matter and Extraordinary Commission documents show Vyrubova's testimony that Rasputin approached the Tsar and Tsarina regarding the Rubinstein issue, but was turned down.[159]

Simanovitch recounts a number of other incidents where Rasputin intervened on behalf of Jews. In one case, substantiated by General Spiridovitch, Rasputin, after several heated exchanges with Foreign Minister Sazanov, succeeded in freeing a Jewish doctor named Lekkert from a German prison, in exchange for German prisoners of war held by Russia.[160]

In another case, several Polish magnates had been exiled to Siberia by General Brusilov, for allegedly giving the enemy information about Russian positions on the Galician (Austrian/Hungarian) front. A Galician priest had appealed to Simanovitch for help on their behalf. Simanovitch brought Father Casimir, of the Nevski parish in St. Petersburg, to see Rasputin who told him to send for the wives and children of the exiled Poles. Rasputin then took them to see the Tsarina who granted their petition and sent them to see the Tsar who also approved it. Eleven days later, the exiled men were freed.[161]

After Russia took Lemberg and occupied the Carpathian Mountains, Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolayevitch gave orders to stop all windmills belonging to Jews, convinced that they were using the windmill blades as a means of signaling information to the enemy. But Passover was coming and the Jews needed to mill flour for matzoh. Just then, the Russians suffered a minor defeat, for which the Jews were blamed, and the Grand Duke arrested the tzaddiks (wise and pious Hassidic Jews) and other highly respected Jewish clergy. The tzaddiks were sent to Siberia, and some to Kiev prisons, taken in filthy cattle wagons, without being permitted to see family or take any extra clothing. As there was no kosher food, they ate only bread. They had no warm clothes and all of their possessions had been taken from them. They were not permitted to pray and Jewish delegations were not allowed to see them in the course of their journey to Siberia. Halperin, the cantor of the Lemberg synagogue, came to St. Petersburg to request less harsh treatment for these holy men. The authorities required precise declarations with supporting evidence, but before Simanovitch's lawyers could even produce the documents, many of the Hassidim died of cold and hunger. Those who remained had to be taken to the towns of Omsk and Tomsk, but

only four made it that far, the others having died on the journey. Simanovitch presented the Tsar with a plea for mercy for the four survivors. It was granted and the order was telegraphed to free the prisoners. By the time the telegram arrived, every last one was dead.[162]

Simanovitch, as well as the Jewish attorney Gruzenberg discuss the famous "blood libel" Beilis case based on the fallacious Russian concept that Jews participated in ritual murders of young Christian boys. Schlegovitov, an avowed anti-Semite, was Minister of Justice when, in 1911, Mendel Beilis, a Jewish guard at a brickyard, was arrested and accused of murdering a 10 year old Christian boy named Yuschinsky. When the trial began, in 1913, it was not just Beilis, but the entire Jewish population that was on trial.

Rasputin hated Schlegovitov and bluntly insulted him whenever they met. He allegedly warned Schlegovitov that he would lose the trial. According to Simanovitch, Rasputin told the Minister of Justice: "Jews don't spill Christian blood; I know this better than you."[163]

Simanovitch prevailed upon Rasputin to speak with the Tsar about the case, which he tried to do repeatedly. But the Tsar told Rasputin to leave it alone. Beilis, after two years in prison, was eventually acquitted and released at the end of 1913. The boy's mother and her boyfriend were finally found guilty of the murder, as the boy had been witness to some criminal activity of theirs.[164] The right wing wanted, at all costs, to prove "ritual murders" by Jews, but the accusations against Beilis were so fraught with lies that nationalist leader Vasily Shulgin told Schlegovitov, "It is you who are perpetrating a human sacrifice. For you, Beilis is no more than a rabbit on your vivisection table."[165] After the 1917 revolution, the Provisional Government began prosecuting former cabinet members for crimes against the Russian people. They found a paper trail in the Beilis case, showing the Minister's complicity in the falsification of documents and testimony. Schlegovitov was convicted and ordered shot. The murdered boy's mother was shot as well.[166]

Gruzenberg was one of the lawyers seeking to exonerate Beilis. He himself was up on charges for accusing Lieutenant Colonel Ivanov of lying under oath, but was let off with a warning. After the 1917 Revolution, Gruzenberg had the opportunity to see the five-volume file of secret materials

on the Beilis case. Not only did he learn that police had been sent to 'visit' the jurors prior to the case, but also that anyone who sent the defense attorneys sympathetic letters was put under surveillance. He also saw, in those files, letters addressed to him (which he never received) containing information essential to the case, as well as letters he had written to his son and daughter which, of course, never reached them. In addition, there was evidence that witnesses for the defense had been detained, and that the real murderers of the Yuschinsky boy had been concealed.[167] Included in this secret file were reports from two Police Department agents noting that while there was no evidence against Beilis, "the ignorant members of the jury, guided by a hatred of the Jews, will find the defendant guilty even without evidence."[168]

In 1916, Simanovitch was asked by the son of Zeyev, chairman of St. Petersburg's synagogue, to use his influence in the affair of the Kiev sugar manufacturers, Hepner, Babushkin, and Dobry. They'd been accused of treason, having sold sugar to the Germans. The exported sugar had been contracted for a year before the war, and was to be distributed in Persia, but it wasn't delivered until after the start of the war. Rasputin agreed to help, knowing that trial by a military tribunal would have devastating consequences. Zeyev assumed financial responsibility. Rasputin pushed to get it transferred to a civil court, but the army wouldn't relinquish the case. A petition was presented to the Tsarina, in Hepner's daughter's name, explaining that the sugar had been sold long before the war, for distribution in Persia, and that they had no idea how it arrived in Germany. The Tsarina sent the petition to the Tsar at General Headquarters asking him to set things right. In the course of these events, Rasputin was assassinated. A new Minister of Justice had just been appointed and ordered the case dropped, but the military tenaciously held its ground. The Jewish attorney Sliosberg sent another appeal to the Tsar and the sugar manufacturers were freed shortly before the revolution.[169]

A case of much less gravity was the request from Jewish impresario Fischsohn who sought permission to stage Yiddish operettas. Even within the Pale, no Jewish theater had been permitted. Fischsohn gave Simanovitch a list of troupe members which was presented to the Tsarina.

Aron told her that he wanted to present Jewish plays in his home and added that the Bishop Isidor (who understood Yiddish) would be present at the opening and could act as a censor, if need be. He made it known, too, that Rasputin and Prime Minister Sturmer would attend, which prompted her to grant permission and order the police to issue a permit. The debut was a success and Fischsohn received a permanent permit.[170]

Every day, Aron Simanovitch received requests from Jewish parents who traveled long distances to have their children admitted to institutions of higher learning. They paid what they could to bribe authorities or cover tuition for Christian students, when the quotas for Jewish students had already been filled.[171] Then, there were those who simply wanted to take a business trip abroad, extending beyond the time limit permitted, and through Rasputin, he obtained permission for these people.[172]

As previously discussed, the right to domicile, for a Jew, depended on the trade he practiced and passing an exam for that trade, while practicing no other. Simanovitch, as a jeweler, had the right to employ workers, which he did on paper. However, they didn't work for him but were actors, singers, writers and teachers.

Through Rasputin, Simanovitch had some influence on the choice of candidates for the Artisan's Council, which was of great help in certifying and permitting many Jews to reside in Moscow or St. Petersburg. At one point, in 1916, when Interior Minister Khvostov exiled Simanovitch to Siberia (retribution for Simanovitch's report to the Tsarina about Khvostov's plans to assassinate Rasputin), these Jews panicked, fearing expulsion from St. Petersburg. But the Tsarina intervened and Simanovitch returned to the city, while Khvostov was sent into retirement.[173]

Rasputin was also instrumental in averting pogroms. If a pogrom menaced a town or province, he would inform Simanovitch who would send a telegram to the locals stating, "Worried about your health. Send a telegram." When Simanovitch received word from Rasputin that the latter managed to cancel the pogrom (as he did in Minsk and Vilna), Simanovitch would wire the local rabbi or other influential Jew, "Hope all to be back in place tomorrow. Will give news as soon as I can leave." This

signified that the village governor and local police had received urgent orders to intervene against the agitators.[174]

One morning, in 1911, Rasputin alerted Simanovitch to warn the locals in Kiev of a planned pogrom. At that time, Rasputin also added, "that's the end for the old man." "The old man" was their name for Council President Stolypin. Rasputin told Simanovitch that the pogrom could be averted if the Tsar did not take Stolypin with him on a trip to Kiev. Otherwise, Stolypin would be assassinated there. Although warned, the Tsar insisted on having the Council President accompany him. The latter was indeed assassinated. Rasputin advised the Tsar to stifle any anti-Semitic agitation in Kiev, and the order was given. There was no pogrom.[175]

In 1910, the Russian government decided that many Jews only became dentists and pharmacists to circumvent the residential restrictions.[176] As previously stated, if an apothecary's assistant, unable to find work, opened a druggist's shop, for which his training qualified him, this was considered a change of occupation, leading to forfeiture of his residence. In Kiev, at the start of 1911, 200 apothecaries' assistants were in this position, opening or working in a pharmacy. They were all closed down and these Jews were forced to leave town.[177]

At about the same time, in what was known as the "Smolensk Affair,"[178] 307 Jewish dentists were to be tried in Moscow, having been charged with obtaining their degrees simply to prevent expulsion from their homes.[179] Rasputin and Simanovitch presented a petition to the Tsar explaining the dentists' situation. The Tsar stated that the Minister of Justice did not want to pardon the accused, but finally signed the petition, and the dentists were absolved. Upon their release, they bought Rasputin a mink coat and gave Simanovitch a honey cake, a bottle of red wine, and a silver Jewish goblet.[180]

Michel de Enden uses the case of the dentists to exemplify Rasputin's intervention on behalf of Jews.[181] General Spiridovitch remarked that obtaining liberty for the dentists made Rasputin very popular among Jews.[182]

A merchant's wife, blaming the Jews for putting her husband out of business, asked Rasputin why he didn't use his powers to eliminate all the Jews in Russia, to which he replied, "Are you not ashamed to talk like that? They are people just like you and me, and I expect we all know at least one good Jew, if only our dentist."[183]

Even Rasputin's murderer, Prince Yussupov, quotes Rasputin as saying, "They're all at me to liberate the Jews. And why, I think, shouldn't I? They're no different from us…we're all God's creatures."[184]

One of Rasputin's greatest advocates is Elizabeth Judas who knew him from the time she was nine until she was nineteen or twenty (when he died). Her husband, Alexander Ivanovich Judas (she was married at 16), was an officer in the Okhrana (the Imperial Secret Service). Her family had known the Rasputins for three generations back. She fervently asserts that Rasputin's support of the Jews was the sole cause of his vilification and death. In fact, she blames the Jews. She remarks on Rasputin's sympathy for Jews persecuted by the government, but shows her own anti-Semitism by declaring that Rasputin didn't realize that Jews were sent to Siberia for being criminals and revolutionists.[185] As many of us know, if not from the tame persecution depicted in the play "Fiddler on the Roof", then from the stories of our own grandparents and great-grandparents, many Jews who were imprisoned, sent to Siberia or slaughtered were innocent of any wrong-doing. Many historical documents and books, such as *The Legal Sufferings of Jews in Russia* and *The Russian Government and the Massacres* recount the unjust treatment of Jews in Tsarist Russia. One has only to look at the laws on the books at that time to know that Jews were persecuted simply for being Jews, though Judas denies this.

Judas feels that Rasputin was naïve in his support of the Jews and enumerates how many Jews were involved in the Revolution, ignoring the fact that many Russian military, politicians, police and other government officials also took part in the Revolution, a fact which the Tsarina's confidante Vyrubova confirms in her statement that the pre-revolutionary unrest was rife among high society and the Duma, not just the Revolutionists. Vyrubova asserts that all of Russian society and government were guilty of this treason.[186] Judas, however, notes how many Jews were leaders of the Communist party and implies that the oppressed should simply have submitted and accepted their lot rather than toss off the yoke of centuries of

oppression. In her opinion, Jews themselves were at fault for their exclusion from society, as they were the "enemies of Christ", and that they should have been grateful that Nicholas II gave the Jews more privileges than any other tsar. This, of course, is completely untrue.

Judas does grudgingly admit that despite the "reforms" of Nicholas II, there was still *some* persecution of Jews and that Rasputin continued to preach equal rights for all regardless of faith. As many others have documented, she also states that Bishops Theofan and Hermogen rebuffed Rasputin for his support of the Jews and consequently spread the rumor that Rasputin himself was a Jew. At this comment, and illustrating her own prejudice, Judas remarks, as if a laughable idea, "a Jew at the Imperial Court!" This statement bears witness to such an unthinkable prospect at that time.[187]

Chapter X – What Became of Them

Since Rasputin's brutal murder by Prince Yussupov and other nobles, as well as his subsequent autopsy, are well-documented, they won't be recounted here. Less well known is what became of his secretary, Aron Simanovitch.

At the start of the Russian Revolution, Simanovitch and his family were arrested, along with Rasputin's daughters. His family was freed the next day. Simanovitch, upon interrogation by the Provisional Government's Extraordinary Commission, testified that he'd done nothing but sell jewels to the nobility and help his fellow Jews whenever possible. The attorney Sliosberg even telegraphed Kerensky, head of the new Provisional government, on Simanovitch's behalf.

Simanovitch, however, was sent to Peter and Paul Prison, transferred to Prison of the Cross, and finally sent to St. Petersburg Prison. He offered Minister of Justice Peraversev 200,000 rubles for his freedom and was released with the proviso that he leave St. Petersburg as soon as possible. Once freed, however, he paid another 40,000 rubles in attorney's fees to have the order lifted. He then moved to Moscow, Kiev, Odessa, then to Novorossiysk.[188]

He finally escaped Russia, probably assisted by the many grateful Jews who, with Rasputin's help, he saved from punishments, war, and the oppressive legal restrictions on them.[189]

Aron Samuilovitch Simanovitch, born in 1872, finally settled in Paris where, in 1944 at the age of 72, he was taken from his home by Nazis in World War II, as reported by his grandson, Henri Simanovitch, and recorded in the Central Database of Shoah Victims' Names.[190] He was transported to Auschwitz where he was murdered. His elder son Salomon (or Semyen) was shot by Nazis at Mont-Valéries in 1942. His younger son, Ioann, escaped to Monrovia, Liberia, where, at least into the late 1960's to early 1970's, he operated a Russian restaurant called "Rasputin".

Marya Rasputin married a young officer, Boris Soloviev, in late 1917 and they eventually escaped to France, where Soloviev died at Montmartre in 1926, leaving Marya to raise their two daughters on her own. She supported them by entertaining in cabarets and eventually moved to the United States where she performed with animals in a circus. She died in 1977, at the age of 78 in Los Angeles, having defended her father's character in three books she wrote.

Simanovitch had made arrangements for her younger sister, Varya, to go to Germany in 1923, but when Soviet authorities searched her at the train station, they found a journal chronicling the life of the Imperial Family in Ekaterinburg. Varya was detained and mysteriously died of poisoning.

Rasputin's wife, Proskovia, and his son, Dmitri, were exiled far into Siberia, in the early 1930's, for resisting Soviet collectivization, and undoubtedly died there.[191]

Grigori Efimovitch Rasputin

Chapter XI – Conclusions

Many erroneously believe that Rasputin single-handedly caused the fall of the Romanov Empire. Roullier asserts that it is impossible for one man to cause the fall of an empire without concurrent historical, economic and sociological conditions already in play. In addition, the Tsar generally didn't follow Rasputin's common sense advice such as reducing the price of meat and bread, prioritizing shipments of food to the capital, and pulling counterfeit currency from circulation. In any case, his recommendations were motivated by the best of intentions – to save the monarchy and Russia. [192]

In 1907, a French war correspondent covering Russia met with Suvarin, director of New Times (Novoe Vremia) newspaper, who stated, "All of our problems stem from the Tsar and only the Tsar … this man has been fatal to Russia and more catastrophes await us under his rule."[193]

Kerensky, who was a lawyer and, after the revolution, head of the Provisional Government, declared, "What connection…could exist between the war, the Russian Revolution, the fall of the monarchy, and Rasputin? None! …the causes of the Russian Revolution are multiple and complex."[194]

Toward the end of 1916, revolution was in the air, with the increasing dissatisfaction and hunger of the population. Rasputin's many recommendations for avoiding revolution, with regard to rations, aid to the peasants, redistribution of land, and giving rights to minorities, were never followed. The result was strikes and mass killings. Many warned the Tsar, including his mother and the British Ambassador, that he needed to return to the capital to attend to these problems, but he persisted in staying at general headquarters.[195]

De Jonge states that the government was so unstable in its last two years that forty different ministers were cycled through thirteen cabinet posts, including four prime ministers, four ministers of war, and six ministers of internal affairs. These changes only served to weaken the regime. In

addition, the cost of living doubled for the working class during the war years. This was one of the underlying causes of the Revolution.

Vyrubova asserts that the Russians, especially those from the privileged classes, were responsible for the Revolution. She states, "For years before the Revolution, the national spirit was in a state of decline. Few men or women cherished ideals of duty for duty's sake. Patriotism was practically extinct. Family life was weakened, and in the last days, the morale of the whole people was lower than in almost any other country of the civilized world."[196]

Count Witte's analysis of the dissatisfaction among all the classes was that: the nobility wanted to limit the sovereign's power by constitution, on condition of being able to share the power; the industrialists dreamed of a constitutional monarchy assuring taxpayers of a leadership role in the economy; the intellectuals wanted a democratic constitutional monarchy, with an eye toward becoming a republic; the working class desired a full stomach and socialist reforms; and the peasantry wanted land to till and an end to the arbitrary land ownership by the aristocracy.[197] In 1898, Witte had written to Nicholas II, "May God protect Russia from a throne supported only by certain social classes." For Witte, the aristocracy "is simply a mass of degenerate humanity, which recognizes nothing but the gratification of its selfish interests and lusts, and which seeks to obtain all manner of privileges and gratuities at the expense of the taxpayers generally, that is, chiefly the peasantry."[198] As the state subsidized most of the nobility, with few doing anything for it, Witte saw them simply as parasites. [199]

Author Andrei Amalrik finds that if Rasputin's agrarian program of expropriating land from the aristocracy, with compensation, and distributing it among the peasants had been instituted, there would not have been a revolution. If, as Rasputin had advised, the transport of food to hungry Russians and the end of the black market had been a priority, this would have decreased the discontent of the general population. In its absence, it predisposed the people to revolution. Bringing an end to discrimination against Jews and giving them full rights and citizenship, which Rasputin worked for, also could have helped avoid a revolution. Even without considering previous centuries of discrimination, the systematic pogroms terrorizing the Jews during the war played an important role in the

revolution. According to Amalrik, all of Rasputin's programs would have been a viable means of averting the 1917 revolution. In fact, he points out that Lenin instituted many of these, giving land to the peasants, making peace with the Germans and according full rights to the Jews.[200] On March 21, 1917, the Provisional Government abolished all religious and ethnic restrictions, granting Jews and other minorities equal rights.

Aron Simanovitch described Rasputin as having a strong belief in God and taking great enjoyment in teaching and discussing religious questions, philosophy, and morality.[201] He gained favors for others and helped the disenfranchised skirt some of life's cruelties. Rasputin had no interest in money and never asked for any. He instructed his wealthy followers to give to the poor. He had a good heart and rarely turned anyone away.[202] If he could not be of assistance, it grieved him. He took up the causes of the oppressed, sometimes receiving up to 200 people a day.[203] If military officials (seeking promotions or decorations) were in the crowd, he would tell them, "Generals, you are accustomed to being served first. Nevertheless, I see here Jews who have been deprived of all rights. I will attend to their needs first."[204]

In defense of Rasputin, and in light of accusations that he caused the fall of the Romanov empire, Simanovitch remarked that from the day of Nicholas II's coronation until his death, the Tsar's reign was encumbered with wars, revolutions, plots, assassinations and intrigues of all kinds. He saw two primary causes for these problems: the political unrest of the era and the weak will and indecisive character of the Tsar.

Simanovitch noted that everything the Tsar touched came to an unhappy end: the coronation ended with the bloody trampling of people vying for souvenirs; the construction of the railroad through Manchuria led to the ill-fated Russo-Japanese War; the peaceful assembly of workers, led by Father Gapon, bringing the Tsar a petition for better conditions, ended with a firing squad and the murder of Father Gapon.

This last event, which occurred in January, 1905, changed the way that many workers and peasants viewed the Tsar. The factory workers were poorly paid, poorly fed and worked long hours. They marched to the Winter Palace (although the Tsar had just moved to Tsarskoye-Selo), unarmed, with their wives and children, carrying portraits of the Tsar and icons, singing

religious songs as they went. They were simply bringing a petition asking for better working conditions. But the Cossacks charged with sabers and fired cannons into the group. (One young man on his way to a dancing lesson was struck unconscious, but fortunately survived to become the famous ballet dancer, Nijinsky.) When the Tsar was told that 150 people had been killed and 200 wounded, he asked, "Are you sure that you've killed enough people?" The day came to be known as "Bloody Sunday", and the Tsar, in the eyes of the people, was often called "the Murderer". Rasputin was not in the capital at the time of this fiasco.[205] As an important footnote to this event, the lawyer Gruzenberg notes that the Minister of Justice had full knowledge that the event was to occur and even called in Father Gapon who acknowledged the planned demonstration, saying that it would take place and was perfectly legal since no barriers were supposed to exist between the Tsar and his people.[206] So, the event was no surprise to the authorities.

Simanovitch surmised that Nicholas II brought the revolution on himself and that there is no reason to believe that events would have followed another course had Rasputin never existed. His assessment was that Rasputin was sorely misunderstood:

"His character was unjustly falsified and compromised. If one believes in destiny and justice, Rasputin was sent *not* to precipitate the loss, but for the health of Russia and the monarchy. He was spurned. He was ferociously killed, and this cruel fate saved neither Russia nor the Tsar."[207] In fact, reviewing Rasputin's efforts and intentions, the Romanov dynasty might not have come to such a violent end if Rasputin had had great influence over the Tsar.

There was nothing to be gained by Simanovitch in his efforts to vindicate Rasputin post-mortem. It has always been much more popular and accepted, not to mention profitable, to vilify the peasant rather than vindicate him. It's notable that the Russian press and its cartoons portrayed Rasputin in much the same way they portrayed Jews – as evil, ugly, wicked and destructive. Along with fabricating rumors, this was typically how the aristocracy discredited those they feared or despised. At its worst, in 1916, the Bolsheviks sold pamphlets with faked, doctored photographs showing Rasputin being obscenely intimate with the Tsarina and her daughters.[208]

General Spiridovitch, in his biography of Rasputin, stated that Khvostov, Minister of Internal Affairs, spread lie after lie about Rasputin in an effort to get rid of him, after the latter refused to support his nomination for Prime Minister. He was the first official to spread the rumor that Rasputin was a German spy. Although he went to the press with these stories, he never said a word to counter-espionage authorities, even after Spiridovitch confronted him on this disparity.[209]

Oleg Platonov, a contemporary Russian historian and author of the Russian biography *A Life for the Czar; The Truth About Grigory Rasputin*, was interviewed on the Voice of Russia in 2009. He found Rasputin to be a man of faith who angered a number of people with his outspoken beliefs. Platonov asserted that all of the slander and lies began with Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolayevitch when he discovered that he couldn't use Rasputin to manipulate the Tsar. The Grand Duke's colleagues and acquaintances propagated and embellished the slander. Platonov stated that most of the accusations against Rasputin in this smear campaign were, upon investigation, found to be unsubstantiated.

Alexei Varlamov, a Russian writer and winner of the Alexander Solzhenitsyn Prize, discussed his research on Rasputin, in a 2010 interview, stating, "The myth of Rasputin has clearly overshadowed the real man. If we try to sum up the more or less reliable, moderate data on Rasputin, it is clear that he was an extremely talented man, a unique product of the peasantry … the legend definitely exceeds the reality here."[210]

Roullier's book culls from his extensive bibliography of memoirs, biographies, and documents, to present a convincing case for Rasputin's defense which is in the format of a posthumous legal trial, with witnesses for and against the accused. As an introduction to his defense of Rasputin, he reminds us that Rasputin loved and respected the Imperial couple, calling them "Mama" and "Papa" because, like most Russian peasants, he considered them to be the mother and father of Russia. He sincerely wanted to help the Tsar and felt he could do so all the more effectively because, as a peasant, he was the voice of the people.[211]

Roullier responds to four of the most popular accusations (having addressed all of the others): his illiteracy, hygiene, alcohol consumption, and sexuality. First, he notes that the accusers are all from the aristocracy and begin their criticism by calling Rasputin an "illiterate

muzhik" ("muzhik" is a Russian peasant). Being illiterate and being a peasant are social states and neither are crimes. But the charge is evidence that Rasputin's detractors scorned him primarily because he was not of their social class. Roullier cites this as an example of the deep class division that was a precursor to the revolution.[212]

Second, Rasputin is accused of being dirty, crass and unkempt. The author comments that to an obsessively perfumed and pomaded aristocracy, he may have seemed so. However, it is well documented, even by the secret police, that he frequented the bath houses (the most common way of bathing since most residences of that time did not have baths). Simanovitch also recounts that bathing was a daily ritual for Rasputin.

Third, Rasputin ate simply and frugally. He generally drank only Madera and disliked strong alcohol (though Marya tells us that toward the end of his life, he did drink more). In addition, he did ask the Tsar to outlaw the sale of vodka during WW I, as he felt it was destructive to soldiers and their families. One must remember, too, that this charge of alcoholism was leveled by nobles who consumed the best French champagne by the case and had full wine cellars. The nobility certainly did not display the level of sobriety they demanded from Rasputin.[213] Drinking was a very popular pastime not only in Russia, but in much of Europe.

And, finally, the subject of sexuality, which for most is a personal and private affair, is somehow a state affair where Rasputin is concerned. If Rasputin was a sensuous human being, this was by nature, not by choice. The accusations of sins of the flesh hide many of the nobility's jealousies, as well as their own affairs with their mistresses. Vyrubova, who was medically verified by the Provisional Government as a virgin, stated that none of the women in their religious circle had an affair with Rasputin, nor did they know of him having a mistress. Most of the reports of affairs were by secret agents who followed him (in the streets, not inside private rooms) and no women could be found by the Extraordinary Commission to corroborate these reports. In fact, one of these reports was presented to the Tsar who noted that at the time and day of the reported event, Rasputin was in fact in the palace and in the Tsar's presence. The society that accused Rasputin was not without its own lack of morals.[214] Roullier describes Rasputin as "a mirror onto which Petersburg society projected their own

excesses and defects" which, Rasputin warned them, would engulf them if they continued on that path.[215]

In fact, De Jonge points out that by the time Rasputin arrived in St. Petersburg, a great degree of sexual promiscuity already existed, as evidenced by the numerous newspaper advertisements for treatments for syphilis and gonorrhea. In the bookstores, sales of pornographic literature greatly exceeded that of radical politics.[216] He also references a 1913 article, published under the pseudonym of P. Vassili, criticizing St. Petersburg society as focused on pleasure-seeking rather than on the rising current of anarchism and revolution.[217]

Anna Vyrubova, also noting the aristocracy's decadence, states that in the winter of 1915, while millions of European soldiers were sacrificing their lives in World War I, St. Petersburg society "was indulging in a reckless orgy of dancing, sports, dining, yes, and wining also in spite of the Emperor's edict against alcohol, spending enormous sums for gowns and jewels, and in every way ignoring the terrible fact that the world was on fire and that civilization was battling for its very life. To spread slanders about the Empress, to inflame the simple minds of workmen against the state was the most popular diversion of the aristocracy."[218]

While Vyrubova, who knew Rasputin well, does not believe that her account of Rasputin as a pious strannik is weighty enough to change the world's mind about him, she does rail against accounts of him as a scandalous and foul character. She recounts the widespread belief in the power of his prayers, his healing abilities and scripture interpretations, and attributes the unfounded accusations against him to what she calls "the strangely abnormal and hysterical mentality of the Russian people of that epoch."[219]

Russian author Andrei Amalrik begins his defense of Rasputin with a discussion of his name which, the author feels, has been routinely misinterpreted as "debauched", from the Russian word "rasputa". Amalrik reminds us that Grigory's father and relatives bore the name "Rasputin" long before Grigory was born. In his view, it most likely springs from "rasputia", meaning "crossroads". This makes sense since the town of Pokrovskoie is situated at the intersection of two routes, one leading to Tobolsk and the other to Tyumen. Many inhabitants of that region bore the same surname.[220]

Author Judas also denies the translation of "Rasputin" as having a villainous meaning, but states that it means "pilgrim".[221]

Amalrik describes Rasputin as gregarious, stating that he enthusiastically approached strangers in public, as if they were long lost family, sometimes embarrassing or annoying them, although he always did so with warmth and humor. Even among his critics, he was never accused as having a condescending attitude. It was his sense of equality and familiarity that annoyed his critics. The last Minister of the Interior, Protopopov, remarked that Rasputin lacked any leanings toward slandering others.[222] In fact, his nature was more forgiving than vengeful. In 1914, when his former friend and protector, Bishop Feofan, turned against him, Rasputin remarked, "Today, he resents me, but I don't hold it against him because he prays to God. His prayer would be stronger if he dropped his bitterness." He believed in the Russian adage: "A bad reconciliation is better than a good quarrel."[223]

Amalrik discusses the abrupt change in Rasputin's life when he started drinking after Guseva's 1914 assassination attempt. With the war, constant slander and attempts on his life, he lived in a perpetual state of nervous tension. Grigory stated, "I'm tired. I'm pursued. I sense misfortune." Alcohol assuaged the intolerable pressure and sense of impending doom.[224] Rasputin faced a number of unfavorable factions: the traditional bishops who wanted the monopoly on being the intermediary between man and God; the right wing element who had hoped to use Rasputin as a path to the Tsar, but felt his egalitarianism reeked of leftist qualities; the nobility who feared losing its traditional role, with the breach in class barriers caused by a peasant having the Tsar's ear; and the bureaucrats who feared that a struggle (caused by Rasputin) between the people and the administration would only create scandal and diminish their authority.

These factions had been campaigning against Rasputin for years. In fact, in 1911, to take a break from these adversarial attitudes, he went on his second pilgrimage to Jerusalem where he wrote in a letter to the Tsar, "the greatest sorrow is to see brother against brother and they don't even recognize each other as one of their own."[225] Amalrik points out, as have others, that the high society of St. Petersburg who were spreading rumors

about Rasputin were not exactly models of virtue, and that in reality, it was not his "immorality" that disturbed them, but his democratic leanings.[226]

When the published accusations against Rasputin became numerous, the journalist G.P. Sazanov often proposed attacking this or that publication. Many of Grigory's allies were upset that he never responded to any accusations. Rasputin's response was always, "Remember, my friend, how our Savior suffered. Next to that, my worries are nothing. May God pardon them." Marya Rasputin tells that when her father was shown a hostile article in the newspaper, he would generally laugh and say, "Well, journalists have to earn a living."[227]

With regard to the women, most men in power have had (and taken advantage of the fact that) many women throw themselves at them. Many heads of state and government representatives all over the world, then and now, have been known to have mistresses or affairs and continue to fulfill their state duties. Rasputin didn't need to force himself on women. They offered themselves to him. Even if one has a taste for alcohol and women, these are not necessarily indicators of an evil disposition. At the worst, they can be considered as nothing more than human weaknesses, *if* they existed.

Ternon proposes that the body of myths about Rasputin were built around a skeleton of exaggerated, imagined, and false accounts, creating a legend intended to be the scapegoat for all of Russia's woes. These far-fetched tales were fodder for novelists, cinematographers, and those seeking to profit via sensationalism.

The legend, in Ternon's view, is structured around three themes: eroticism, fantasy, and politics. The erotic theme portrays Rasputin as a repulsive individual who uses hypnosis and religion to seduce innocent young girls. He's depicted as a charlatan. The theme of fantasy is created in a troubled atmosphere within the framework of churches, convents, caves and cemeteries. Rasputin is depicted here as rising from the depths with all of the characteristics and appearance of the devil. He's perceived as communicating with "the beyond" and being able to tempt others despite his "ugliness" and "filth". He is, in this scenario, the demon. The political theme arises from the other two. The rumored orgies and alleged satanic incantations lead to a Good versus Evil plot – the foreigner against Russia – the "spy". A scapegoat was needed and Rasputin was an easy target. The

demonic stereotype was readily accepted and spread, becoming "historical" account, without anyone questioning it.[228]

Ternon reviewed and summarized many other works on Rasputin's life. The first biography, *Raspoutine, La Fin d'un Régime* (Rasputin, the End of a Regime) by Bienstock (1918), is largely a collection of all of the rumors and myths, concluding that Rasputin personified "the folly and criminality of the tsarist regime." William Le Queux, a novelist, took great liberties in his work (1919), throwing historical fact to the wind, and letting his imagination run wild. [229] His eye was undoubtedly on sales rather than historical accuracy.

A number of such books appeared in the 1920's, reinforcing the myths and laying the groundwork for perpetuating the allegation of Rasputin as demon. The archives seized by the Bolsheviks after the Revolution, as well as the interviews by the Extraordinary Commission, lent the opportunity to rehabilitate Rasputin's image, but it was largely disregarded. It lacked sensationalism. The Bolsheviks had no reason to falsify the tsarist documents, as it was to their advantage to show the corruption of the tsarist regime.[230]

After the Provisional Government examined the testimony of witnesses and the police reports, Vladimir Mikaelovitch Rudnev, one of the investigators, stating that there was no evidence of Rasputin belonging to the Khlysty sect, said: "Rasputin was a man of large heart. He kept open house, and his lodgings were always crowded with a curiously mixed company living at his expense. The investigation disclosed an immense amount of evidence concerning petitions carried by Rasputin to the Court, but all these, as has been said, referred merely to applications for positions, favors, railway concessions and the like. Notwithstanding his great influence at the Court, not a single indication of Rasputin's political activity was disclosed."[231]

Author De Jonge states, "The part Rasputin played in Russian history has little to do with facts; it derives from the tangled mass of hearsay and innuendo in which he was wrapped. It was not so much what Rasputin did but what he was *rumored* to do that mattered. In this respect he was, literally, a legend in his own time. The legend was known to the whole of Russia, the man to very few. Even the manner of his death was legendary, nor do the legends end with his death."[232] While De Jonge buys into much

of the myth of Rasputin's political power and sexuality, he does concede that if Rasputin had been a member of the nobility who had gained prominence, proximity to the Imperial Family, and a scandalous reputation, he would not have been maligned or criticized.

Lili Dehn, wife of the captain of the Tsar's yacht, states: "Rasputin was not the villain of the novel and the film. In my eyes, he was an uneducated man with a mission…The reports of his dress and extravagance are also very much exaggerated. Rasputin lived and died a poor man. He usually wore the clothes of a peasant and his wonderful jeweled cross only exists in the brains of novelists and journalists."[233]

Aron Simanovitch's memoirs, published in Russian (Riga, 1928, and subsequently in other languages in 1930), showed Rasputin to be sympathetic to the Jewish cause for equal rights. But, in 1942, the Nazis edited his book to make it appear that Rasputin was simply a pawn of the alleged Jewish "plot to conquer the world."[234]

Marya Rasputin's attempts to rehabilitate her father's image have largely been ignored as the work of a daughter who simply loved her father. Memoirs by ambassadors and aristocrats, including Rasputin's murderers, largely attempt to promote the image of an evil Rasputin who was to blame for Russia's ills. And, with each demonizing book or screenplay that was written, the writers embroidered further on a myth, escalating it to new heights. Many of these works were also overtly anti-Semitic. Ternon, however, finds General Spiridovitch's biography (1935) to be one of the fairest accounts. He finds the General very objective, using his archives and official correspondence to refute the notions that Rasputin belonged to the Khlysty sect or that he was a German spy, and to substantiate his endless aid to Russian Jews.[235]

Nicholas II's own assessment of Rasputin was: "he's simply a Russian, good, religious, with a simple spirit; when in pain or doubt, I like to talk with him and invariably, I feel at peace with myself."[236] Lili Dehn reports that when the Tsar was handed the police file on Rasputin's murderers (the Tsar's relatives), he said, "I am filled with shame that the hands of my kinsmen are stained with the blood of a simple peasant."[237]

The reason many people of all social strata sought out Rasputin was that he was known for his generosity toward the poor, his administrative

favors for those in government or military positions, and his ability to aid those in dire legal straits and seek justice.[238]

Many have wondered why, if Rasputin was psychic, he did not foresee his own demise. Most psychics will agree that while they may see some world events (not all) and forthcoming events in the lives of others, rarely do they have precognition with regard to their own lives. Indeed, if one could foresee everything that was to happen in one's own life, there would be little point in living it. Even with regard to other people, they may have foresight in some areas, but not in others. Often, they have little control over what comes to them. However, many accounts by friends and family report that Rasputin was aware that his end was near. Such feelings and statements on his part were less prophetic than logical, considering the numerous assassination attempts and accusations of espionage and immorality. He could simply see that events were coming to a head and became anxious and depressed. He just didn't know when or where, but the writing on the wall was evident. Still, he had often repeated to the Imperial Couple that if he died, they would lose their son and the throne within six months. While this prophecy bore itself out, it was more about the royal family than about Rasputin.[239]

Pierre Gilliard, a Swiss teacher, was a tutor to the tzarevitch Alexei and French teacher to the Tsar's daughters. He also spent three years in exile in Siberia with the Imperial family, before they were put to death. He states that the majority of Russian peasantry who knew of him was favorable toward him. Rasputin's death was seen as the aristocracy's vengeance, since they were jealous of his position in the royal family. [240]

The poor and especially the Siberian peasants held a special mass in honor of Rasputin, after his death. In Pokrovskoie, the villagers decorated his courtyard chapel with flowers. After the revolution broke out, the soldiers dug up his body and burned it in the forest. When the peasants saw what they'd done, they formed a circle around the fire in a night long vigil.[241]

One Russian peasant, claiming his opinion to reflect that of the majority of peasants, stated, "He was a man of the people; he let the Tsar hear the voice of the people; he defended the people against the Court people, so they killed him. That's what's being said…"[242] And, in 1918,

a young army officer passing through Pokrovskoie heard many of the locals praising Rasputin, saying that he took their side in presenting their situation to the Tsar and that this is why the bourgeois killed him.[243]

Vasily Maklakov, a member of the Duma, reported the joy of the aristocracy upon Rasputin's death. He wrote, in the foreword to Purishkevitch's (one of Rasputin's assassins) memoirs: "A woman of the aristocracy, a few days after the assassination of Rasputin, visited a military hospital where she found herself among a large number of wounded soldiers. Still full of joy, she went up to the beds of some of the wounded men. She waited to see the joy in their faces. She saw only hostile silence. She was surprised. 'Yes,' one of the soldiers told her, 'only one peasant managed to get as far as the throne, and it was him that the aristocracy assassinated.' The murder of Rasputin stopped nothing, changed nothing; it added a fresh uneasiness to the feelings of the people – it hastened the catastrophe. The inevitable drew nearer."[244]

Amalrik concurs, noting that it was a small group of monarchists, led by Prince Yusupov, the Tsar's nephew, who succeeded in murdering Rasputin, with the objective of saving the Romanov dynasty from the "discredit" cast on it by the peasant who, they felt, furnished the liberals with a tool to undermine the aristocracy. The assassination by the Tsar's relatives degraded the Imperial Family and, instead of saving the monarchy, precipitated its fall.[245]

Princess Catherine Radziwill stated that when Rasputin was murdered, although St. Petersburg society rejoiced the elimination of the "vermin", as they called him, the majority of the population was greatly upset, as they had the greatest admiration for him. They had great confidence in him and knew he was constantly pleading their case to the Tsar.[246] This is interesting especially in light of the fact that the princess, in her 1918 book *Rasputin and the Russian Revolution,* shows herself to be not only anti-Semitic, but also accuses the Tsarina Alexandra, whom Radziwill calls an "evil genius", of being responsible for many of the problems in the Tsar's reign. She also notes that gossiping was a tremendous pastime in St. Petersburg society. In fact, her books on the heads of state in her time were popular for the gossip she filled them with. Radziwill was also known to have a hand in fabricating the anti-Semitic hoax *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion.* She depicts Rasputin largely as a pawn of those (the Jews,

primarily) with an agenda, but does say that those who couldn't obtain favors from him were the ones who hated him and subsequently portrayed him as a dangerous individual.

Judas describes Rasputin's murder as an example of the madness of the power hungry nobility. She cites a statement in Yusupov's memoirs wherein he refers to "the terrible effects of Rasputin's influence" and states that neither Yusupov nor anyone else has ever produced any evidence to substantiate their allegations. Judas declares, "The real traitors were the cowardly group of 'patriots' who murdered an innocent man in cold blood and sacrificed their country to the god of Greed."[247] She calls Rasputin "a victim of jealousy, hatred and politics" and says, that he "…was neither Devil nor Saint, but only a man, a preacher of the gospel, and a highly self-educated teacher. His character was enviable. On the whole, he was a strangely clever, resourceful man – a man of exceptional religious and psychological learning – a man we learned to love for his many good qualities."[248] She goes on to state, "I never heard a profane word or an indelicate expression from Father Rasputin's lips. He was an honest follower of Christ, and an upright, loyal, and faithful Russian of high integrity and purity in morals, big-brained, big-hearted, a loving and adoring servant to the Emperor and his family."[249]

Joseph Fuhrmann, in his biography, *Rasputin: A Life*, declares Rasputin to be an apparent friend and advocate of the Jews, and finds his opposition to war and nationalism to be equally remarkable.[250]

But this is what it boils down to, in very simple terms: while the Romanovs were responsible for the slaughter of numerous Jews, peasants, Armenians, Tartars and Georgians, Rasputin never harmed nor killed a single human being, and even forgave those who tried to assassinate him. That said, it's ironic that the Romanovs are deified while Rasputin is vilified. The fall of the Romanov Empire was more a tragedy for the aristocracy than the common man.

As for Simanovitch, some regard him as a criminal (although no particular crimes are ever cited) merely because the Tsar's secret service described him so. It is true that, in addition to being a jeweler, he ran a gambling parlor, but that establishment was frequented largely by the nobility and government officials. It seems that the only 'crime' he committed (other

than spreading or fabricating court gossip in his memoirs, as was widespread practice among the nobility) was that of circumventing unjust laws, in order to aid the oppressed and disenfranchised Jews, and the poor in general.

At the end of his memoirs, Simanovitch leaves us with a memorable eulogy for his friend Grigory Efimovitch Rasputin:

"I never saw him do anything evil or wrong. In fact, his mission was to be good to everyone. If Nicholas II was a bad tsar, Rasputin was not to blame. With my assistance, he helped thousands of people, with a real and sincere goodness, and no personal profit involved. Numerous were those he saved from misery, death, humiliation and suffering. This I will never forget."[251]

And neither should we.

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